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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

IN THE

RECRUITING AND LABOUR DISTRICTS.

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BOMBAY BRANCH

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1906.

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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

IN THE

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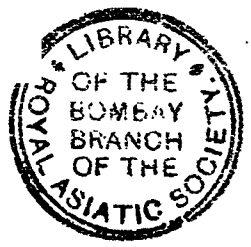

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1906.

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RECRUITING DISTRICTS.

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Map

SHEWING

THE

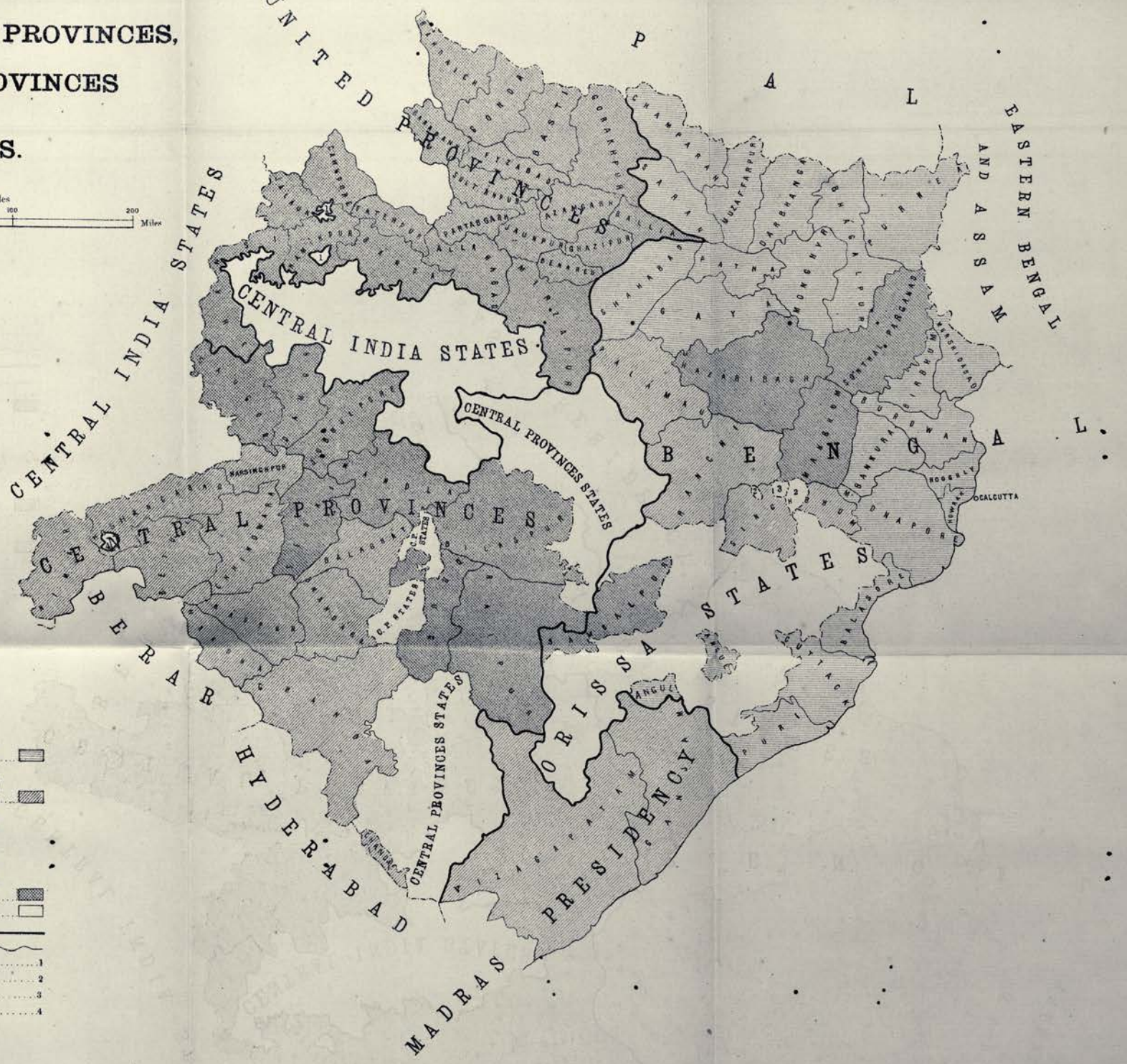
RECRUITING DISTRICTS

IN

BENGAL, UNITED PROVINCES, CENTRAL PROVINCES AND MADRAS.

Scale 1 Inch = 61 Miles

100 50 0 100 200 Miles



REFERENCES.

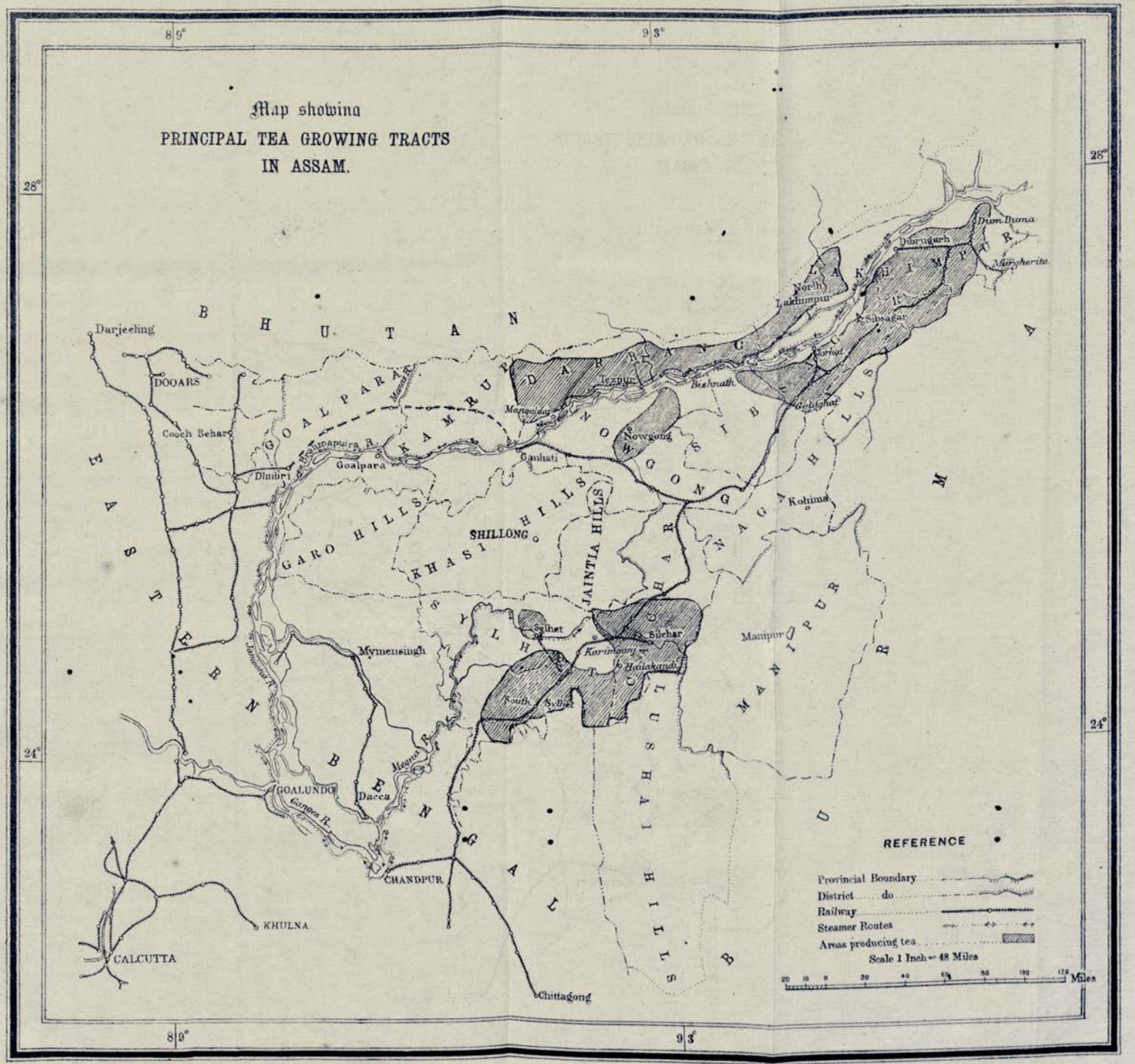
Districts open to free emigration under Section 92 of Act VI of 1901	
Districts notified under Section 3 as closed to emigration, except in accordance with Chapters III and IV of Act VI of 1901	
Note 1.—The Districts to which Section 90 has been extended are also notified under Section 3.	
Note 2.—The Agency Tracts in Ganjam and Vizagapatam are closed to recruiting.	
Districts in which recruitment under Section 90 of Act VI of 1901 is allowed	
Native States	
Province or State Boundary	
District Boundary	
C. I. States	1
Sarnikela State	2
Kharsawan ,,	3
Makrai ,,	4

Specially prepared for Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

No. 2075., Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.—Aug. 06.—1,300.

Zincographed by the Vandyke Process at the Survey of India Offices, Calcutta.

MAP
of
AREAS UNDER TEA IN
ASSAM.



Specially prepared for Assam Labour Enquiry Committee

No. 254 K. Assam Labour Enquiry Committee—Aug 06—1,200.

Dir. Process, S. I. O., Calcutta.

RESOLUTION by the Government of India, Department of Commerce and Industry, Nos. 1384—15 (Emigration), dated Calcutta, the 20th February 1906.

Appointment of a Committee to consider the question of recruitment of labour for the tea gardens of Assam.

The question of the supply of labour for the tea gardens of Assam has for some time past engaged the attention of the Government of India, and of the Local Government. Special enquiries instituted regarding this matter demonstrated that the situation in Assam compared unfavourably with that in the other tea-producing tracts of India, both in respect of the relations between employer and employed, and as regards the system of obtaining labour. In a Circular, dated the 28th March 1905, addressed to the Indian Tea Association and to its local branches, Sir Bampfylde Fuller attributed this result chiefly to the power of arrest which managers of gardens possess under Section 195 of Act VI of 1901 and expressed the opinion that the indiscriminate use by some managers of this power had produced in the minds of the ignorant labour force a feeling of helplessness and unprotected bondage. He considered that the existence of this feeling was mainly responsible for the marked unpopularity of service in Assam; and pointed out that the result of this aversion is that the tea industry has been, and is burdened with the payment of very heavy charges, while the labour force recruited is both intractable and inefficient. The remedial measures suggested were the withdrawal of Act VI of 1901, with the exception of Sections 122 and 123, from the Surma Valley and from the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup, and the abolition, in the Assam Valley, of the sections conferring a power of summary arrest on tea garden managers. In the Surma Valley the Act is already practically inoperative, inasmuch as ninety-eight per cent. of the labour force is recruited otherwise than under its provisions, while the number of labourers employed in the Goalpara and Kamrup districts is insignificant, Sir Bampfylde Fuller was of opinion that the time had not yet arrived for withdrawing the Act as a whole from the Upper Assam Valley, but he recognised that the ideal to be aimed at was a system of free supply of labour.

2. The replies of the representatives of the tea industry, and of the district officials, to this circular have now been received by the Government of India, together with Sir Bampfylde Fuller's views thereon, and a statement of his final conclusions on the subject.

3. There is a consensus of opinion among the Surma Valley planters that the Act should be withdrawn from that Valley. The Indian Tea Association, and the Assam Branch of that Association, have, however, raised several objections to this proposal, and they ask that the question may be treated as a whole, on the ground that the interests of the two Valleys are intimately connected. They apprehend that, if the case of the Surma Valley be dealt with separately, the difficulties experienced by them in obtaining labour will be still further accentuated, and they request that the whole question of the labour supply throughout the Province may be referred to a representative Committee for enquiry and report. Sir Bampfylde Fuller adheres to his former views, which further examination has, in his opinion, only served to confirm.

4. The Government of India desire to express their appreciation of the care and ability with which this difficult and delicate subject has been treated. They fully agree that the present system, which has led to serious abuses, cannot in any case be allowed to continue, if these abuses are in fact a necessary result of the adoption of that system; and they are disposed to think that the remedies suggested may provide a satisfactory solution of the difficulties which have in the past hampered, and which still seriously impede, the development of the tea industry. The question is, however, one of peculiar difficulty: the interests at stake are of great magnitude; and the fullest discussion of the matter is desirable, in the interests alike of the Government, the tea industry, and the labourers. For these reasons, the Government of India are averse from pronouncing a final opinion on the points in issue, until the problem has been exhaustively examined by a representative Committee.

5. The advisability of withdrawing Act VI of 1901 from the Surma Valley has been strongly pressed by the majority of the planters in that Valley; the proposal is approved by the Tea Association, London, and is recognised as inevitable by the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, who admit that the issue is one which should be decided primarily on a consideration of the wishes of the majority of the planters in the Surma Valley. After a full consideration of the question, the Government of India have determined to accept the recommendation of the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam that the Act should be withdrawn from the Surma Valley, and from the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara; but they consider it undesirable that the withdrawal of the Act should take effect until an enquiry has been made as to the measures necessary to maintain a full supply of labour for the Upper Assam Valley, after the Act has ceased to apply outside it. The withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley is indeed only tantamount to the legal formulation of the practice now obtaining there; but, as it is unlikely that such a measure could be carried out without affecting, to some extent, recruitment for the Assam Valley also, it seems to the Government of India to be essential to treat this matter as an integral part of the general question. In arriving at this decision and in deciding to appoint a Committee, the Governor General in Council has been largely influenced by the opinion of the Indian Tea Association, and of the Assam Valley Branch of

that Association. His Excellency in Council holds strongly that the support and co-operation of the tea planters and agents is necessary in order to place the labour question upon a satisfactory footing and to effect a permanent and material improvement in the labour supply and conditions in Assam; and he trusts that the Committee will be able to devise recommendations which will be accepted and loyally carried out by planters and agents alike.

6. For the reasons stated in the preceding paragraphs, the Government of India have decided to defer passing final orders on the proposals of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam until the questions connected with emigration to the districts of the Upper Assam Valley have been examined and reported on by a Committee. The Committee will consist of the following gentlemen:—

Mr. B. Robertson, C.I.E., I.C.S. (Nominated by the Government of India)	President.
Mr. C. H. Bompas, I.C.S. (Nominated by the Government of Bengal) Mr. W. Milne (Representative of the tea industry in the Surma Valley) Mr. Hugh Gordon (Representative of the tea industry in the Assam Valley)	Members.
Captain W. M. Kennedy, I.A. (Nominated by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam.)	Member and Secretary.

7. The points which the Committee will be required to investigate are:—

I. The general working of Act VI of 1901 in connection with emigration to the labour districts in the Upper Assam Valley, special attention being paid to the following questions:—

(*a*) The causes which have rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour.

(*b*) Whether the time has now arrived for withdrawing the Act from these districts.

(*c*) Whether, if the Act be withdrawn, a new enactment governing emigration into the Upper Assam Valley will be required. In this connection, it should be considered whether Act XIII of 1859, either in its present form or with modifications, would be suitable.

(*d*) What measures should be adopted in order to render service in these districts more popular, to remove the abuses which now exist, and to prevent their recurrence. Sir Bampfylde Fuller's proposals, and more particularly his suggestion to withdraw Sections 195 and 196 of the Act, should be considered, as also the possibility of organised recruiting by the Indian Tea Association, or by some other body similarly constituted.

(*e*) The expediency, if Act VI be retained, of extending the scope of Section 90 of that Act, and

(*f*) The effect of Madras Act V of 1866 (Labour Contracts with Natives Act) in restricting emigration to Assam from that Presidency.

II. Whether the withdrawal of Act VI of 1901 from the Surma Valley districts will prejudicially affect recruitment for the Upper Assam Valley districts; and, if so, to suggest measures calculated to ensure a sufficient supply of labour for these districts, after the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley and Lower Assam Valley districts.

The Committee will proceed to such of the recruiting districts as they may consider it advisable to visit, and they will also tour in the labour districts of Assam. They are not precluded from considering any matter which they may deem pertinent to their enquiry, but the Government of India desire to emphasise the fact that the question of the desirability of withdrawing the Act from the Surma Valley, and from the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup, does not fall within the scope of their investigation.

8. The Government of India trust that the Committee may be in a position to submit their report within five months from this date.

ORDERED, that a copy of the foregoing Resolution be forwarded to the Governments of Madras, Bengal, the United Provinces, Eastern Bengal and Assam, to the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, to the Home and Finance Departments, and to the Secretary to the Committee.

ORDERED, also, that it be published in the *Gazette of India* for general information.

G. I. C. P. O.—No. 549 C. & I.—8-8-1906.—1110.—W. J D.

Proceedings of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee in the Recruiting Districts.

The following Note regarding the subjects of the Committee's enquiry was circulated in the Recruiting Districts visited by the Committee.

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

Subjects of Enquiry.

THE question of the supply of labour for the Tea Gardens of Assam has for some time past engaged the attention of the Government of India and of the Local Government. As a result of the discussions on the subject it has been decided to withdraw the Surma Valley districts of Sylhet and Cachar, where most of the labour is at present recruited outside Act VI of 1901, and the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, where the labour question is unimportant, from the operation of the Act of 1901. A proposal has been made by the Local Government that, in the remaining labour districts which form the Upper Assam Valley, Sections 195 and 196 of Act VI of 1901, if the latter is to remain in force, should be repealed. These sections confer on employers the right of arresting without warrant absconding labourers indentured under the Act. The loss of liberty, which follows from the indiscriminate use of these sections, has been put forward as accounting for the marked unpopularity of emigration to Assam. The withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley districts and from Kamrup and Goalpara has been objected to on the ground that it will interfere with the supply of labour for the districts of the Upper Assam Valley. The Government of India has appointed this Committee to enquire into the working of Act VI of 1901 in connection with emigration to the labour districts in the Upper Assam Valley, and to suggest measures for the maintenance of a full supply of labour for these districts, after the Act had ceased to apply outside them.

The points on which the Committee are specially desirous of obtaining information are the following:—

(*a*) The causes which have rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour for Assam, and whether the existence of the penal contract for four years and the right of private arrest conceded to employers, have contributed thereto.

(*b*) Whether if the Act were withdrawn from the whole province and a system of free labour were established in Assam, there would be danger of recrudescence of the abuses in the recruiting districts which existed under Act I of 1882.

(*c*) What measures should be adopted in order to render service in the districts of the Upper Assam Valley popular. In this connection, the following are suggested for consideration:—

1. Repeal of the Act.
2. Withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196.
3. Repatriation of labourers on the expiry of their contracts.
4. The promotion of colonization by the grant of land with a revenue-free term.
5. Increase of the pay of labourers.
6. The placing of facts regarding the wages and condition of labourers in the Tea Gardens before officers and others interested, in the recruiting districts.

(*d*) The reasons for the present high cost of the recruitment of labour. In this connection should be considered:—

1. The extension of Section 90 of the Act.
2. The grant of further facilities to recruitment by garden sardars.
3. The withdrawal of recruitment by contractors; or if contractors be retained, the placing of all contractors, in parts where Section 92 of the Act is in force, under Chapter III of the Act.

(*e*) Whether the withdrawal of Act VI of 1901 from the Surma Valley districts and the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara will prejudicially affect recruitment for the Upper Assam Valley.

(*f*) Whether the existence of free emigration to the former districts side by side with recruitment under the Act for the Upper Assam Valley, will lead to difficulty in the recruiting districts, and whether abuses are likely to arise in consequence.

W. M. KENNEDY,

Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

The 15th February 1906.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

IN THE

RECRUITING DISTRICTS.

ASANSOLE, 19TH FEBRUARY 1906. **Asansole.**

(MR. W. MILNE *absent.*)

The following witnesses were examined :—

No. 1.—MR. F. J. AGABEG, *Manager, Messrs. Apcar & Co.'s Collieries and Zemindaries in the Burdwan District.*

I have lived for 25 years in the Burdwan District. I have no personal experience of the Assam recruiting question. In my opinion the two main reasons why people do not go to Assam are the want of freedom there and the development of local industries nearer the homes of the coolies. I think that the penal contract in Assam is one great reason for its unpopularity. Coolies come back with probably exaggerated stories of the system. I remember about twelve years ago, some coolies who had been to Assam returned, and said that they did not want to go back ; they worked here in the mines. The main reason for their dislike for Assam was that they had to do a fixed task and could not get leave when they wanted it. On the collieries and railways people can come and go as they like. I do not think it would be good policy to imprison coolies who do not work off their advances. We should not do so, it would give us a bad name and prevent our getting labour.

The collieries employ probably some 80,000 people, and we could do with 50 per cent. more. We cannot obtain all the labour we require. There is no labour which we could not employ, but which would be suitable for Assam. A miner seldom works more than 15 days in a month, and earns R15 or R20 ; some Santals earn as much as R30 a month. Unskilled labour costs from 3 to 4 annas a day ; women are paid 2 annas a day. Men from the United Provinces often go back with R200 to R300, and return with their friends. Coolies on the mines have a free house and a bigah of land and keep cows. Bilaspuri coolies come to the mines for a season or two, but keep in touch with their friends at home. Owing to competition for labour in recent years, we have had to raise our rates.

We recruit through sardars whom we pay R8 per month. The sardar acts as a ganger, and goes down the mines and supervises the work of his men. He is not paid commission on the coolies he brings in.

I object to the free depots at Asansole as intercepting labour which the collieries might get. I think that nobody wants to go to Assam, people are tempted to go by specious promises. Most of the coolies got here are stray travellers whom recruiting contractors pick up on the Grand Trunk Road.

To induce people to go to Assam I would recommend the following :—

(1) Give them an advance and do not recover it.
(2) Pay them daily.
(3) Pay them by the piece and let them have leave when they want it.
(4) Reduce the term of the contract to two years, as coolies get homesick.
(5) Repatriate them after two years.

I think it would be a good plan also if Government undertook the recruiting, as it would reduce the cost and prevent abuses. There used to be abuses in connection with recruiting of labour for Assam, but that has stopped with the passing of the new Act.

Asansole. Among managers of mines there is a good deal of competition for each other's coolies, but between mines in the neighbourhood there is generally an arrangement not to employ each other's men; this arrangement, however, does not extend to mines at a distance.

No. 2.—Babu A. N. Chatterji, *Sub-Deputy Magistrate, Raniganj.*

I have been at Raniganj for nearly two years. There is only one licensed depot at Raniganj belonging to Mr. Mackertich of Calcutta; all the others are free under Section 92 of Act VI of 1901. Since August last, labourers recruited for Assam have been produced before a magistrate before being despatched.

Most of the coolies are got from Chota Nagpur and the Santal Pergannas. I think that the coolies are usually recruited in their districts, and are not got locally. The coolies are told to say that they have come to Raniganj of their own accord. I examine into suspicious cases, but as the general reply is that the coolies have come here of their own free will, nothing further is done. The coolies are generally brought here on the pretence of getting work at the collieries or other local concerns. I tried a case in July last where a man had been taken to Khudiram Misr's depot; finding he was wanted for Assam he left; the manager and one of the chuprassies caught him again and were taking him by force to the depot, when the police interfered. Both the manager and the chuprassi were convicted under Section 342, Indian Penal Code. There have also been some cases where convictions were obtained under Section 164 of Act VI of 1901. The reason for not prosecuting more such cases is that the coolies do not give evidence. The women particularly are cajoled. I have known of cases where they have been told they will be kept as the mistress of some person of means and will get money and ornaments. If the contractors are put under the Act, it will stop these abuses, but there will be very few coolies got. The one licensed depot at Raniganj gets only one or two coolies a month.

There is only one sardari agency; it is at Asansole. The sardars recruit their relations or caste-fellows. I have had no complaints about them; they take away whole families and not single people like the contractors.

I think a reason for the unpopularity of Assam is the long term labourers have to serve there. I have met returned coolies who have said that they were recruited for three years but they were not allowed away at the end of that period. I have also heard them say the Assam fever was very bad. On the other hand, I have found coolies in the depots going back again; I have seen several such at Mrs. Hill's depot, they said they had come to fetch their families.

Since the rule about recording the names of emigrants in a register has been introduced, the extent of recruiting has fallen off. There is less enticement practised.

No. 3.—Babu A. N. Sen, *Labour Agent, Raniganj.*

I reside at Raniganj. I have depots at Burdwan, Asansole, Nawadah and Raniganj. I do not keep a regular staff of recruiters, but take coolies from any person who brings them in. When a coolie is brought in I enquire his place of residence, etc. If the recruiter tells me that he has got the man from a district not closed to free recruiting, I take the coolie, even if his home is in a notified district. I pay recruiters ₹70 for first class, ₹50 for second class and ₹40 for third class coolies. First class coolies are Kols, Santals, Mundas, Bhumij, etc.; second class consist of Bauris, Kamars, Tantis, Rajwars, Ghatwars, Lohars, etc.; and the third class are United Provinces, Central Provinces and local Bengali coolies. As soon as the coolies are shipped from Goalundo we pay the recruiters. The price paid varies according to the demand. It is generally less in the rains when gardens do not want any labour. Recruiters do not generally pay the coolies anything. Sometimes coolies come of their own accord. We make these a gift of ₹30 or ₹40 each as soon as they are shipped, but only if they ask for it and refuse to go without such payment. If coolies who come in of their own accord do not ask for money, they do not get anything. We are paid by the employer as soon as a coolie is shipped from Goalundo, and it does not matter to us if a coolie deserts after leaving Goalundo. We sometimes supply coolies subject to the garden manager's approval. In that case we are not paid till the coolie arrives on the garden and is approved of by the manager. We receive something extra for coolies sent on approval during the cold weather, but not for those supplied during the rains. We do not send coolies who have bolted, back to Assam, but some, whom we have sent up and have bolted, have returned and taken to recruiting of their own account. I know that some contractors do send professional bolters back to Assam, *i.e.*, coolies who make a business of going up to the gardens for the sake of the advances they receive. If a man were sent up to Assam from Calcutta and bolted back and came to me and I knew nothing about him, I should send him up. I explain to the coolies the rates of pay which they are to receive. I have never been to Assam and do not therefore know what pay can be earned there beyond the statutory wage.

Asansole.

If Section 92 were withdrawn from this district the supply of coolies would run short as the coolies would be brought before a magistrate who would make enquiries about them. As a matter of fact most of the people free recruited under the present system have been *phuslaoed* by the recruiters. All coolies are now interrogated before being despatched under the Bengal Government's Rule 224, which was introduced last July. This has somewhat interfered with our business as people sometimes turn round before the magistrate. We should lose at least half our supply of coolies if Section 92 were withdrawn. At present there is only a very casual examination by the magistrate. We put all our coolies under contract for three years under Section 492, Indian Penal Code, before despatching them. We get local coolies from Asansole and Raniganj. They are generally people who have warrants against them or who have had a domestic quarrel. Outside of this class we get no local people as they can earn more in the coal mines. I know nothing about sardari people. I have been in the business for 2½ years. My experience is that free recruiting is not doing so well as it used to, especially after the introduction of the new Rule 224 which has frightened arkatis. When I first started I used to send up about 80 or 90 coolies a month, but I send 50 or 60 now. I do not get many Chota Nagpur coolies, but obtain a number from Dumka and Hazaribagh; many, however, said to belong to the two latter places are not really so, but recruiters pass them off as such in order to get the prices for first class coolies; most United Provinces coolies are passed off as being from Hazaribagh. Since February I am getting R120 for a first class, R100 for a second class and R90 for a third class coolie. In the rains the price falls, as do our rates to recruiters. Some depots give their recruiters R15 or R20 less than the price which they receive at Goalundo. This is done by contractors who keep no establishment and by small men starting in the business.

The supply of labour would be increased if the special Act were repealed and the term of the contract reduced to one year. The enquiries made by Government Officers make people think that there is misery in Assam. There would be lots of labour available on a one year's contract at R9 per month. Another thing against Assam is that coolies never come back. If they came back after a year they would return again with their relatives and friends. If there were no contractor's system and we were not paid such high prices there would be nothing to tempt the recruiters to entice coolies. United Provinces coolies demand a higher rate of pay, but Bengali coolies do not care about the pay. I have heard women tell the magistrate that they would only get R2 or R3; they only wanted to get away.

No. 4.—Babu Fakir Chandra Sarkar, *Free Contractor, Raniganj.*

I was a licensed contractor for three years, and since June 1904 have been a free contractor. I have worked all along at Raniganj. I gave up my license because I got few coolies. P. S. Naidu took out a license in 1902, and at that time Mr. Hill was a free recruiter. There were only the three of us. Naidu has left the business. There are now eight or nine depots in Raniganj. In 1904 I, with a license, could not compete with the free contractors. I have done better on the free recruiting system: but I mainly get up-country men from Monghyr, Bhagalpur, and Gaya, no *junglis*, or very few. From April to November last my depot was closed, owing to some unwilling coolies being found in it. There was a case about this, and some of my men were tried and acquitted. One of the coolies complained that he had been beaten. I sent away 20 or 30 coolies last month. I have some peons who bring coolies. Outsiders also bring them. I have seven or eight peons on R7 or R8 each and also pay them R1 to R5 if they bring a coolie. I pay R40, R50 or R60 to an outsider who brings a coolie, according to the class of the coolie. If a coolie asks for an advance, I pay it. If he asks for R20, I give it. I cut this out of the price paid to the arkati. Many coolies ask for an advance; 40 per cent. of them do so. Old hands want more; new men will take R2 or R5. There are men who take an advance and then bolt from the garden, and go to another depot and get another advance. There are many such professional bolters. I would not knowingly despatch such a man. These people change their names and descriptions. I get paid for my coolies when they are shipped at Goalundo. I get R100 for a first class coolie; I would pay the recruiter R60 or R80 for such a man. I have to pay their expenses up to Goalundo out of the R40 or R20 difference. I make R5 to R10 on each coolie. I get a few *junglis* from Burdwan or Bankura and a very few from Dumka or Chota Nagpur. I take a coolie from Ranchi, if he has come of his own accord. I do not take coolies from thanas Silli, Tamar and Khunti, as no one may take a coolie from there. I get very few coolies from the closed districts. I do not enquire how they come to me. The magistrate questions my coolies before despatch. Many coolies become unwilling before the magistrate, I do not know why they do so. I have paid nothing for them then to the recruiter.

If Section 92 recruiting is stopped here, the number of coolies will diminish by two-thirds, this will be due to enquiries being made. The recruiters will be afraid; they will think they would be detected before the magistrate if the coolie turned unwilling. I tell coolies that they will get R5 a month in Assam and have to stay for three years. I put all my coolies under Section 492, Indian Penal Code contracts. Coolies will not go to Assam without inducement; a recruiter or sardar must induce them. I do not think more coolies would go if there were no contracts in the labour districts. If the pay were raised to R8, more coolies would go. They would be willing to go for three or four years. Coolies would gladly go for R8.

Asansolé. 20TH FEBRUARY 1906.

(MR. W. MILNE *present.*)

No. 5.—DR. O'CONNOR, *Sitarampur.*

In 1897 I was for eight months in the Dibrugarh district and four months in the Sibsagar district. I was a medical officer on tea gardens there. From Assam I came to the coal fields and have been here for the last eight years. I know chiefly about the Santal coolie, and the reason why he does not care to go to Assam is that he gets better wages down here and easier work in a better climate nearer his home. I think there is very little chance of Assam getting more labour from this part of the country; the numbers who go will become less and less. The coolie is now wide-awake as regards Assam. He has been so often deceived, that the recruiter has very little chance of getting him to go. I would not say that it is the fear of Assam itself that stands in the way; it is the methods employed in catching coolies that have given Assam a bad name and made emigration there unpopular. In any case, the demand for labour here is so great that there is no prospect of *bonâ fide* emigration taking place. Even increased wages will not draw people.

Comparing life on a tea garden with life at the mines, the labourer on the latter is a free man; he does not work more than five days a week and can leave when he pleases. In Assam the labourers were not free; they could not leave the garden to which they were indentured, they got homesick and that acted upon their health. The work also was of a kind they were not accustomed to. I think the matter of getting acclimatised was as much mental as physical. If they were free labourers, they would get on better as they would be happier and could leave a place that did not suit them. In Assam I thought that sardari coolies did better than arkati coolies, as they found themselves amongst their relations and friends.

I was for eight months in the Terai which is quite as unhealthy as the part of Assam I was in. I ascribe the better health of the coolies in the Terai to the fact of their being free. It may have been a case of survival of the fittest, as the Terai coolies had to walk several hundred miles and only strong people could undertake or last out the journey. But in many cases they struck me as being a more cheerful lot than the Assam coolies. As a result of their being despondent in Assam, coolies frequently took to earth eating, which in my opinion was one of the main causes of the disease *anchylostomiasis.*

No. 6.—MR. W. DOUGLAS, *Assistant Manager, Messrs. Finlay, Muir & Co.*

I formerly resided in Sylhet where I had been for nine years, and am at present at Raniganj passing coolies who have been selected by the selecting agent of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. I have also a local agent's license on behalf of my employers' gardens for all the notified districts in Bengal and the Central Provinces.

In the free districts there are depots at Raniganj, Asansole and Midnapur which I visit from time to time. In these I get coolies from the contractors' depots after they have been passed by Mr. Whyte, the selecting agent. The coolies I get are generally satisfactory. Out of about 300 coolies I have got this year from these depots, only about 12 have been unfavourably reported on by the gardens. There is great competition amongst the representatives of different employers for coolies. One sometimes gets a batch at a certain rate, when another employer's agent comes in and offers the contractor more money or agrees to take a bigger batch and the contractor gives him the lot. The prices of first and second class coolies were ₹100 and ₹80 up to about a month ago: they have now risen to ₹120 and ₹100. We want more coolies than we get and of a better class. There are plenty of inferior coolies, *viz.*, from Behar, Gaya and Monghyr, to be got at Raniganj, but we do not want them. These latter coolies, whom we call *khottas*, will not settle down in the gardens; they will go freely to railway works where they can move about as they like and are their own masters, but they will not stay in the garden lines. A considerable number of the coolies we get from the free districts abscond from the gardens, especially in Sylhet; I could not say how many, but it is a common practice amongst the *khottas*. These coolies would do all right as regards health so fa as I know. A reason why first class coolies are hard to get is that they are in such demand for the coal mines and other concerns, where they get well paid. The contractors are up to all manner of tricks to pass off inferior coolies as first class labourers; they make them dress their hair on one side and stain their skins so as to look like aboriginals. It is no use trying to find out a man's caste here, he is so well tutored. It is only when he gets to the garden that the deception comes out.

I have not been to Chota Nagpur this year and do not know enough about the country to say more than that, if the districts were thrown open, there would be plenty of labour of a good class to be got. But while the Act is in force and enquiry has to be made by the magistrate before a coolie is registered, this prevents labour being readily procured. The enquiry frightens everybody, both people who are perfectly willing to go and people who are wavering.

Asansole.

I have been to Sambalpur, Bilaspur and Jubbulpore this year. I got no coolies from Sambalpur contractors, as the latter are all under advances to Calcutta firms to supply all the coolies they recruit. In Bilaspur sardari recruiting is doing well, and in Jubbulpore a fair number of coolies is being got.

I think that if the Act were withdrawn there would be plenty of labour available. There would be a prospect of abuses again arising, I admit, and if this took place and Government again interfered, we should be no better off. If all arkati recruiting were stopped, there would be a difficulty about forming new connections. A sardar could come down only to his own country; he could not go into an entirely new country to collect labour. There would be also the danger of arkatis going up to Assam and coming back as sardars, and they would give the system a bad name. The sardars would require to be under careful supervision to prevent this. I do not think there is anything in the rate of wages to keep people from going to Assam; I think the people in the gardens are really better off than in their own homes. All emigrants are told what their wages are to be and are ready enough to accept the terms offered. I believe that the offer of a better bonus for re-engagement would have the effect of keeping labour on the gardens after expiry of the original contracts. The coolie looks to the bonus, and it would be good policy to encourage him to stay by being liberal in this respect. If land be given to the labourers for settlement that also would be an inducement, if the land belonged to the garden, so that the coolies could be made to come on the garden to work. I think it would be a good plan also to take representative villagers from the recruiting districts to see what life is like on the gardens, so that they could come back and tell their neighbours about the advantages of going to Assam. I do not think the length of the present agreement has anything to do with the difficulty in getting people to go to Assam.

No. 7.—Mr. F. D. Whyte, *Selecting Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Raniganj.*

I have been a Selecting Agent since 1903. Before that I was for 19 years in the Sibsagar district, of which I was a tea planter for 11 years. I am appointed by the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. Rupees 5 per head is paid for selecting coolies; of this I get R3 and the Association gets R2. Only about half the gardens belong to the Association. I supply coolies to the garden managers, and the Calcutta agents pay through me for the coolies. Other gardens have their own agents to approve coolies, who buy apart from me. I supply coolies to gardens not belonging to the Association. These gardens pay me R5 per head, of which I hand over R2 to the Association. This system applies to all gardens, whether they belong to the Association or not. There is another selecting agent at Purulia who does not work under the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association.

My experience as a selecting agent goes to show that Act VI restricts recruiting for Assam. The elaborate enquiries by the magistrates and police frighten the coolies. The free system which is in force in Raniganj gets us a much stronger supply of labour. If recruiting of all kinds were free there is a certainty that abuses would arise again. If contractors were stopped the supply of labour would in my opinion be insufficient. The arkatis have their own methods of enticing coolies. How they persuade the coolies I do not know, but they have some method. If all districts were thrown open to absolutely unrestricted sardari recruiting, and there were no arkatis, there is, however, a good chance of getting a full supply of labour. It is difficult to say what the result would be until a trial has been made, but it is worth giving this a trial.

No. 8.—Seth Jagannath Marwari, *Merchant and Banker, Raniganj.*

I have lived here for 40 years, and finance some of the coolie contractors. In my opinion the reason why so few coolies are forthcoming for Assam is that the pay offered (R5) is too little. At Raniganj coolies can earn 3½ or 4 annas daily, so why should they go so far as Assam? Another thing that puts people off is the three years' agreement. If the pay were increased and the period of the contract reduced to one year, there would be plenty of coolies available from this district. It would also be beneficial if the coolies returned with good accounts of Assam. At present not even 10 per cent. return and those who do come back complain of having had much trouble and fever and of their pay having been cut. I have talked with returned coolies. If the pay were increased and people returned, there would be no need for arkatis or contractors, as people would come and go of their own accord. I would suggest the pay in Assam being increased to 5 annas per diem for men and to 4 annas for women. Bauris, Doms, Haris, Koras and Dhangars would go from this district. I am the owner of a coal mine here. My coolies get 2 annas per bucket, and four or five men together will cut 12 buckets of coal in a day. Contractors *phuslao* people, particularly women. Under the free recruiting system in force here there are still many abuses, but not so many as there used to be. Besides the statutory wage, arkatis tell emigrants that they will receive 4 annas a day extra as *khoraki*, and when the magistrate does not mention the latter, the coolie does not notice the omission, because the arkati has previously warned him that the magistrate will only mention the statutory wage. The above are the views of my community on the subject.

Asansole.

No. 9.—MOHAN MANJHI, *Charanpore, Asansole.*

I am a Santal. I was 25 years on a garden in Sylhet. I was happy and had good masters. I was bungalow chowkidar on R7 a month. I got ill, and when I recovered I came here. I would not go back to Sylhet. I can earn 10 or 12 annas a day here on the collieries, whereas one only gets 15 pice there. The climate is bad there, also. I was *phuslaoed* away when a youth by promise of very high wages. I would go back for 8 annas a day. Santals might be glad to go there, if they were promised land.

21ST FEBRUARY 1906.

No. 10.—BABU GOPAL CHANDRA MITRA, *Vice-Chairman, Asansole Municipality, Honorary Magistrate and Merchant, Asansole.*

I have resided in Asansole for about 25 years. I have had no direct connection with the Assam recruiting business. I do not think that there is much likelihood of emigration from this district to Assam owing to the competition of local industries, and to the better prices now obtainable for agricultural produce. I have often seen people in the contractors' depots here. I think they go willingly, but my opinion is that they are misled by the promise of high pay, etc.

No. 11.—BABU B. K. BANNERJI, *Free Contractor, Asansole.*

I have been working as an Assam Labour Contractor for the last two years at Asansole. I have been in the business for 14 years. Before I came here I was manager to a licensed contractor in Calcutta. I started on my own account as a free contractor at Asansole as I thought that under the unlicensed system I could get lots of coolies. I got 169 coolies in 1904-05 and have sent off 34 up to date this year. I have 10 coolies in my depot now. The introduction of Bengal Rule 224 has led to a decrease in the number of coolies recruited. The reason is that coolies do not like going before a magistrate under the new rule. If a coolie from a notified district comes to the depot at Asansole, I take him. The coolies come from these districts for work at the mines, but failing to find employment they come to the depot. I keep no recruiters; I do not think I can keep recruiters under the law. I keep peons who show coolies the way to the depot. I pay the peons from R7 to R9 per month, and give them a reward of R10 to R20 according to the class of coolie they bring in. I supply only five Calcutta firms, and failing orders from these I also give coolies to other firms. I get on an average about R90 per coolie shipped at Goalundo.

I have got the register which has to be kept up under the new rule. Since September last when it was opened, 67 persons have been admitted into my depot, excluding the 10 persons now present. Of these 67, 34 have been sent to Goalundo, 13 proved unwilling, 2 absconded, and 18 were unfit. Many of the coolies I get come in a starved condition, and I have to feed them up for a month or even more. If at the end of that time they do not improve sufficiently I turn them loose. I give them a few pice on discharge. They often then go to another depot either here or at Raniganj or at Calcutta. Of the 77 people on the register, 12 have come from the open districts and 65 from the closed districts, mostly from Chota Nagpur, the Santal Pergannas, and the United Provinces.

If Government notifies this district and recruiting under Section 92 of the Act is stopped, most probably I shall get no coolies. They will turn unwilling when they are examined by the magistrate. No coolies can be got without enticement. My experience of 14 years is that if a coolie is asked whether he is willing to go to Assam, he will say "Never." There are many ways of enticing coolies, of which the magistrate is unaware. If I tell the ways, I may suffer in consequence. The arkati tells the coolie lots of things, that he will get good pay and other advantages: the coolies are ignorant and do not understand what the contract is, and when they are produced before the magistrate they are told to say they are willing. This does not apply to coolies who take advances, that is, who make their own bargains and stipulate for getting R25 or R30 before they go. It is not an advance, but a present paid to them to get them to go. Most of these coolies who stipulate for presents run away. There are professional gangs of coolies who do this sort of thing. If the Assam gardens will pay R8 or R10 per month just as the coolies get on the mines and all the districts are open to recruiting, then there will be plenty of good coolies and there will be no fraud. Contractors would suffer fewer losses under such a system and would be content with lower rates. There should then be one rate for all classes of coolies: if there are different rates, then the contractor will be induced to pass off inferior coolies as Santals, etc., as is done at present.

No. 12.—Mr. G. P. Cooke, *Free Contractor, Asansole and Midnapur.* **Asansole.**

I have been in the business since November 1894. I closed in March 1901 owing to the new Act which was to come into force in July 1901, and I re-opened in October 1904. I did not think it suitable to work as a licensed contractor, and Section 92 was not understood. Last year I did an average of 70 coolies a month at my two places, Asansole and Midnapur. In the month of January last I sent away more than 100 coolies. I get chiefly *junglis* at Asansole from Bankura, Ranchi, Manbhum and Hazaribagh. The Midnapur men come from Gangpur, Moharbhanj, Balasore, Puri and Singhbhum. The Chota Nagpur men are picked up by Asansole recruiters, it is difficult to explain how. Probably they come here in search of work, or they find the recruiting clauses too restrictive in the closed districts and come here of themselves. I have about 40 to 50 recruiters in Asansole. I pay them by results. I pay them R40 to R80 according to the class of recruiter. The *jungli* arkati who gets the man firsthand gets paid less. If the coolie passes through four or five hands I have to pay more. If I do not give the last of a chain of recruiters a top price, he will take the coolie elsewhere as he is generally a smart man. About 60 per cent. of my coolies reach me firsthand.

I could take many more coolies than I get. The supply is insufficient owing to many causes. Firstly, legislation; under the Act the recruiter gets scared and the coolie is frightened by the formalities he has to pass through. The unsympathetic attitude of district officers towards recruiting deters recruiters. Men do not now hunt for coolies; they wait for the coolies to come to them. Secondly, competition for labour right at the door of the coolie. Thirdly, the Duars; formerly only Lohardaga coolies went to the Duars, now the Duars planters recruit wherever we do. Many coolies go to the Duars from Singhbhum and Midnapur. The coolies prefer to go to the Duars so as to avoid the discipline of the Assam gardens and the long term of the agreement. Fourthly, the zemindar is also generally against the coolie going. To get through these obstacles adds to the cost. Some zemindars demand a premium before they allow recruiting. I refer to parts of Manbhum, Midnapur and Bankura. One zemindar in Manbhum demanded R2,000 a year for one perganna, and he got it. One man had a lease for R1,500; I offered the zemindar R2,000 and his old lessee renewed at that price. In Midnapur I know a case where R600 was asked for permission to recruit in two thanas. This payment is made merely to prevent obstruction. If it is not paid, any ryot found recruiting would get into trouble. This Midnapur arrangement fell through. The arrangement in Manbhum stopped when Act VI was passed. Other zemindars demand R5 to R10 per coolie.

To secure a supply of labour I would abolish the present Act so far as recruiting is concerned, and open out new districts. From British districts there would always be an insufficient supply of good labour. The people are there, but there is enough work for them outside Assam. A coolie wants temporary work. He likes to go and work for a time and return to his home. I think 1,000 or 1,200 coolies of the best quality can be obtained every month from Moharbhanj, Keonjhar, Gangpur and Sirguja. The Rajas at present ask too high a price for permission to recruit in their States. By abolishing the Act you remove the obstacles now existing in the present recruiting districts. I think abuses have increased since Act VI was introduced, but arkatis are sharper and are not detected. Coolies and abuses cannot be separated. If you put down abuses you choke off labour. Abuses in connection with Duars recruiting are very rare. If Assam were put on the same footing as the Duars, abuses would cease in time, but not immediately. When the people had had time to learn that labour was free in Assam the recruiter would be wiped away and people would go by themselves. I do not think that pay has anything to do with the matter. When a coolie has made up his mind to leave the country he leaves. Higher wages might attract waverers. I think that discipline should be relaxed and the task lightened in Assam. I judge from what returned coolies have told me. Such men tell me that Assam is a good place to earn money, but the question is whether you can live to enjoy it. If you are unwell you have to turn out to work all the same. Most returned coolies go back to Assam. They have got to like the place and when they come back they find themselves stranded. They do not want to take to new work and so they go back to the work they know. They spend the money they have earned, and they have lost their lands in their old village. People never complain of the power of arrest conferred by the Act. Coolies who sign the contract are aware that if they abscond they can be brought back by force and made to serve out their term. A contract deters them because it is like a fixed term of imprisonment passed upon them. I think the shorter the contract the more coolies you can get. I do not think that coolies distinguish between Act VI and Act XIII and Section 492, Indian Penal Code, contracts. I put coolies under Section 492 contracts, and when they reach Assam, if the manager chooses, he puts them under Act VI. Before Act VI was introduced, coolies used to be under Act XIII, and since the Act came into force under Section 492. I can give no reason for the change of practice.

I think it is very common for planters to be deceived by having inferior coolies brought down from the North-West and passed off as Rajwars, Ghatwals, etc. I have known Bengalis from Birbhum and Burdwan passed off as Bhumij, Kamars, Tantis. I would have no schedule of rates. Let the employer go to the depot and select his own coolies and pay an all-round rate. Let him go by physique and not by caste, and pay an average price for a mixed batch. If Assam would take *khottas* and Madrasi labour, there would be no outcry for want of labour. The supply is ample. I do not know what the objection to *khottas* is. I hear that they are

Asansole. very refractory and quarrelsome. There is any amount of labour in Nellore, Rajamandri, Vizagapatam and Godavari. Labour from there goes to Ceylon. The people are Telugus. A few Telugus of special castes even now go to Assam.

I have entered into an agreement for 12 months at R135 per head for first class coolies landed at Goalundo. I do not pay for the clothing, and I calculate that the planter has to pay R50 more per head. Second class coolies cost R115 under the contract; but last year I actually got a better price than that. The exclusive arrangement is the result of competition. Prices generally go down in the rains. But I avoid fluctuation under this contract. Last year my top price was R175 for a first class coolie, and I sold others at R160 to R165. I got R150 right through the rains, but for a batch or two I got R100 per head. The coolie very rarely gets any of this money, but a sharp man will get R10 to R40 for himself. I believe there are a few men who make it a profession to take advances and then bolt. I have turned out several such from my depot.

I think that if Government sent notices to every village informing the people that those who wanted to go away and work must pass through a certain channel, and if it appointed a certain agency and assisted that agency, the price of labour would be brought down to about R50 landed at Dibrugarh, but this requires the active support of Government and a good man to work the scheme. Much depends on the man. But the terms of labour would have to be altered ; the contract should be for one year. Fifty per cent. of the coolies would stop longer, but they would be attracted by the knowledge that they would be free to return if they liked. It is not only the agreement but the renewal of the agreement that is disliked. If a planter gets a good coolie he puts every pressure on him to get him to renew his contract. If I go to a village and ask a man to go to Assam, the people reply, "Such and such men have gone to Assam from our village and have not returned, where are they, are they alive or dead"? I do not think that the offer of land on the expiry of their terms would attract emigrants, but the offer of land near the gardens would induce the coolie to settle when once there. Emigrants should be made to communicate regularly with their relatives at home. Each coolie should be made to send home 8 annas or R1 every month. When a coolie has once made up his mind to go to Assam, the question of the inducement offered is not very material. A short agreement with an offer of land and opportunity to cultivate it during the contract might attract emigrants. If the agreement were for seven years, the coolies would cost R300, as the supply would fall, whether land was offered or not.

If recruiting by arkatis were stopped and sardari recruiting were free, the gardens would not get the necessary supply of labour. The sardars and arkatis recruit on different systems and tap different sources of supply. The sardar only works on his own relations. The arkati is smart and can get hold of any one. The sardar can get old returned coolies, but the supply of these is small. Sardari recruiting would run dry in a few years if fresh blood were not constantly introduced. A great many of my coolies have come back as sardars and done very well. A sardar need not be a family man ; a single man may have a large number of relations. Single men are more likely to abscond, but if those who did not abscond got ten coolies a head it would pay. I have known sardars take away coolies when the arkatis had them ready to start off after spending money on them. I think that the sardars steal more men from the arkatis than the arkatis steal from the sardars.

I have got more coolies than the whole lot of licensed recruiters in Chota Nagpur. You can get more coolies as a free recruiter than under a license. The rule requiring the guardian of a single woman to assent to her emigration prevents single women who have lost caste going although they desire to do so, so also where a boy and a girl want to run away together. Practically, all my coolies go to the Assam Valley and mostly to Dibrugarh. Sylhet and Cachar planters get their labour in the same way as the Assam gardens. Sylhet and Cachar could get all the labour they want from the United Provinces and Madras. They would have to employ their own recruiters until they had obtained a connection and could employ sardars. I do not think that the withdrawal of the Act from Cachar would prejudiciously affect recruiting for Assam. If you have free recruiting for Cachar, it is bound to happen that coolies will be nominally recruited for Cachar and will then be sent up to Assam. The ordinary *jungli* knows no difference between Cachar and Assam. They call the whole country Cachar and do not talk of Assam until they hear the name in the depots. I would suggest giving different recruiting districts to Cachar and Assam. Cuttack, Vizagapatam, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Jaipur, Godavari, Rajamandri and Nellore might be given to Cachar. These districts would supply more labour than Cachar could take.

Bengal Rule 224 has not affected my recruiting. The attitude of magistrates in listening to *ex parte* statements by coolies and in attaching no finality to registration deters respectable men from engaging in the recruiting business. The more that respectable men engage in recruiting the more coolies would be obtained. The police levy blackmail. I have known of cases in which the police have got into a train and threatened to make coolies unwilling and have actually pulled coolies out, made them unwilling, and instituted a case. The railway staff have also to be paid. If zemindars could induce their poorest ryots to send one man of their family to Assam to see the place and come back, emigration would be encouraged. Sardars should be sent back after six months on the gardens, and not after four or five years. Such a man's relations would then know that he was alive and he would have more influence with his friends.

Asansole.

Particulars of coolies shown in the register of the free depot of Mr. Cooke at Asansole.

Shipped	218
Rejected	9
Unwilling	1
Repatriated	1
Present in depot	9
TOTAL	238

Of the 238, 106 came from open districts, almost entirely Bankura and Burdwan: the rest were from closed districts, mainly Hazaribagh and Manbhum, including 38 from the Chota Nagpur Native States and Moharbhanj.

No. 13.—MR. A. CHALMERS HILLS, *Zemindari Manager, Bengal Coal Company, Raniganj.*

We are against all recruiting for Assam and coolie depots as they injure us. Contractors entice away our coolies, telling them that they will get pay in Assam at R5 per month, *plus* 4 annas per diem as *khoraki*. When the coolie goes before the magistrate, he is warned by the depot people not to say anything about the *khoraki*, but only to mention the R5 pay. Only yesterday a woman told me that she had been drugged and taken off towards a depot by an arkati. She was, however, recovered before she reached the depot. Once coolies get into a depot it is very difficult to trace them, as they are hidden away or their names or places of residence are changed. Ever since Raniganj became a free recruiting centre, these abuses have been occurring. In the last two years I have prosecuted eight cases and obtained three convictions against depot staffs. I usually prosecute for abduction or illegal confinement. There were many other cases regarding which I could not get sufficient evidence, the people having gone to Assam. In some cases people have written from Assam, and I have got them back. Most of the men are recruited when under the influence of liquor. Affairs are in such a condition at Raniganj now that it is unsafe for women to go out alone at night. My wife's ayah has to go home at night with a chuprassi. The late Sub-Divisional magistrate had two or three depots closed on account of illegal practices. We consider the existence of these free depots to be a disgrace to Government, and the business done in them nothing less than a slave trade. This style of recruiting frightens the whole country side. Some people go to Assam of their own free will, because they are in debt or other trouble, but the generality are enticed.

I have brought a note of some of the cases which I have recently prosecuted. In the first case, which was tried at Govindpur, three women wrote back from Assam that they had been recruited against their will, and the magistrate got them back. The recruiter was tried under Section 164 of Act VI and was sentenced to five months' imprisonment in October last. About a year ago a woman, named Raji Kol, was sent as far as Naihati, from where she escaped and walked back to Raniganj. A complaint was filed under Section 343, Indian Penal Code, and, whilst the case was pending, the woman again disappeared. The story told by the woman was substantiated in the police enquiry which was held. The only conclusion that I can come to is that the woman was got at by the depot people and kept out of the way, or possibly again sent up to Assam. Instead of depots I should like to see Government recruiting agencies worked in the way Colonial depots are managed, with a respectable European at the head and registration. This would purify the system and prevent abuses.

I do not think that there is much labour available for Assam here. We cannot get enough coolies for our own work. We give our coolies in the mines houses and land, yet we cannot get enough, and all the mining concerns are crying for labour. An able-bodied coolie on the mines works 15 to 20 days a month, and can cut two tubs a day, if he works hard, receiving from 4½ to 6 annas per tub. That would give him R12-8 per month, but most coolies are content to do less work than this, as they can get as much as they want by taking it more easily.

No. 14.—BABU AHIPODO GORAI, *Agent, Assam Labour Association, Asansole.*

I have been working at Asansole for the last 14 months. I am the sub-contractor of the Assam Labour Association. Five gardens belong to the Association, and Mr. W. H. P. Driver is its Superintendent with head office at Cuttack.

The agency recruits free labour under Section 92 of the Act. It started in January 1905. Since the introduction of Bengal Rule 224, a register has been maintained of all coolies recruited. The register was opened on 29th August last. There are 109 names in the register. There are six coolies at present in the depot. Of the remaining 103, 66 were shipped from Goalundo, 3 became unwilling, 6 absconded, and 28 were rejected as unfit by the selecting agent, Mr. Mathewson, of Purulia. One of the persons shown as unwilling had taken an advance of R2 from me, but afterwards refused to go to Assam. I lodged a complaint of cheating against him. It was shown that he had played the same trick on another contractor at Raniganj.

Asansole. He was convicted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Of the 109 persons recruited, 61 gave their places of residence as in districts notified under the Act. 48 came from open districts.

Some of the coolies are brought in by peons, of whom six are kept on pay from R7 to R10. Others are brought in by recruiters. We keep no regular staff; any person who finds a coolie can bring him to the depot. If a recruiter thinks he can get a better price at another depot, he will take the coolie there. Most of the coolies are found at the railway station, sometimes they are picked up off the Grand Trunk Road. Most of our coolies are sent to the Assam Railways and Trading Company, Limited, for their coal mine, on R8 per month on a one year's contract. They are generally quite willing to go, because it is for one year and on R8. If the selecting agent, however, takes the coolie for a tea garden, he goes on a three years' contract on R5 to R6 per month. The coolie is not asked whether he wishes to go to the mine or to a garden; it depends on what the selecting agent has got orders for, and the coolie takes his chance. The recruiters get the coolies to come to the depot willingly: they do not entice them. If Section 92 were withdrawn, I do not think we should get more than a quarter of the coolies we now get. The coolie would be put under a four years' contract, instead of the one year's contract most of our coolies at present get; this they would not like. Some might also become unwilling, because of the magistrate's enquiries about guardians, etc. I do not think that the introduction of Bengal Rule 224 has made any difference in recruiting so far as this agency is concerned.

RANCHI, 22ND FEBRUARY 1906.

Ranchi.

No. 15.—REV. E. WUESTE, *German Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Govindpur, Ranchi District.*

I have been over 16 years in Chota Nagpur, of which I spent from 1893 to 1900 and from 1903 to 1905 in Chaibassa. I have also been some time in the Ranchi District.

In my opinion the present Act VI has not stopped all abuses. The arkatis still entice away people, although not to the same extent as formerly. People are still persuaded to assume false names and give wrong addresses, so that their relatives may not be able to find them. I can give several instances of this within my own experience. I consider that the only sound system for Chota Nagpur is to abolish arkati recruiting altogether, and work only through garden sardars under a European Agent. For instance, in Chaibassa Mr. Pickford is local agent with some 700 sardars working under him. I have never heard a single complaint connected with his business. I still think that registration should be compulsory in the case of such sardari emigration; there must be official supervision.

I think that the four years' contract keeps people from going to Assam. The Mundas and Kols are very suspicious, and do not like tying themselves down. Even if you wanted to enlist a Munda as a policeman and said he had to serve for three years, he would be suspicious and would not agree. Another very important matter is to allow the emigrant to return to his country. The employer should say to the coolie, "If you work for me for a certain number of years, I will pay your way back to your country." That would have a great effect on emigration.

I also consider that the grant of some land on easy terms, after the coolie has served for a certain number of years on the garden, would be a strong inducement to people who have lost their all here. Our Missionaries who have gone to Assam and have seen our people settled there consider that their lot is very much improved. They hold their land from Government or from the garden, and not from a zemindar, they are fairly treated, and are contented with their lot. I have heard this also from our Native Christians who have written to me on the subject. In my opinion our Kols, Mundas and Hos would much prefer to go to Assam and work in the fields to going to the Jherria and Raniganj mines on a higher wage. Oraons might go to the mines, but not Mundas. In my opinion the Chota Nagpur aboriginals would be perfectly willing to go to Assam if given an advance, and they would readily stay there and work off the advance without any special agreement. I see no reason why private arrest under Sections 195 and 196 of the Act should be abolished. The planter should have summary means of catching run-aways who have not worked off their advances, and application to a magistrate generally means delay. Besides Kols would sooner be arrested by their own masters than by the police.

Arkati recruiting has given Assam a bad name in these parts; that is why I am so much in favour of abolishing it. It is arkatis who have rushed up the price of coolies. The arkati has to get his price for the coolie from the contractor, and the contractor charges a great deal more to the employer. You must have a depot or place of accommodation for sardari coolies, they must have some place to stay in, and they would not object to going into a sardari depot. I think coolies would prefer to go in plain clothes, without any distinguishing garb. I have not heard them objecting to red jackets, but it would be a good thing to let them go in clothes such as they are accustomed to. There are plenty of people to go to Assam. Many go to the Duars, and they go most readily, as they know they can come back when they like to. The freedom of the Duars it is which attracts them. The Oraons go in hundreds.

I would retain Act VI for sardari recruiting. If the Act is withdrawn from Sylhet and Cachar, I think arkatis will still have a bad influence on recruiting. If you take away the Act from Sylhet and Cachar, it is no use keeping it for the Assam Valley. If the Act were withdrawn, and with it the penal contract, I still think the arkati would find employment.

Chota Nagpur people think that Assam is the end of the world and would not go without some one to recruit them, and the recruiter would still be able to get a price for his coolie. I would most certainly keep the Act, but work it only for sardars. No distinction is made in these parts between Assam and Cachar and Sylhet. Only people who have been there know there is a difference. **Ranchi.**

No. 16.—Rev. E. M. Whitley, *S. P. G. Mission, Ranchi.*

I have been in Ranchi since 1892. I believe that there has been a decrease in abuse connected with recruiting since Act VI of 1901 was introduced. Registration under false names is, however, I understand still common. I have seen cases where this was done by people who wanted to get away without leaving a trace; this is probably the most common case. I believe people are also taken away to Midnapur without registration. I do not think that service in Assam is unpopular with the people. I believe state colonization would give a local supply of labour eventually. I think that an offer of land at the end of so many years' service would attract emigrants. An increase in wages would attract labour, as the Duars terms are, I understand, at present better; the difficulty is to disseminate information among the proper people. The Duars are more popular than Assam because people can come back when they like and it is easier to get there. I think that if the Act were abolished abuses would not revive to the same extent as before, but I wish to reserve my opinion on this point. The Duars coolie gets an advance before leaving his country. As a rule, I believe the *jungli* coolie would work off an advance; some might abscond with it; a good deal depends on the treatment on the garden. The aboriginal is not as honest as he used to be. I have heard of men under advances absconding to another garden which was healthier or offered better pay. I think that the people are daily becoming more able to protect themselves. I have not heard of cases of men being recruited for the Duars and then sent to Assam. I am of opinion that the payment of an advance to the coolie would promote emigration. An advance of R40 or R50 would induce a man to take a four-year contract. Many more people go to work at Calcutta and on the railway lines than formerly, and this will increase; this is a serious rival to Assam. The people prefer to go and work for a short time and earn enough to buy a pair of bullocks. There are more people willing to go and work for a short time and save some money than are willing to go for a long period; one or two members of a large family can go away and earn money for the whole family.

Written statement put in by witness on 6th March 1906.

In my opinion, if the Act were withdrawn from the whole Province, and a system of free labour were established in Assam, there would not be a recrudescence of the abuses which existed in the recruiting districts under Act I of 1882, because under free labour coolies could not command so high a price, and the high price to the recruiter was the chief cause of abuses.

No. 17.—Rev. Father Vandendriessche, S. J., *R. C. Mission, Ranchi.*

I have been 4 years in Ranchi, but I have never lived in the interior of the district. I do not consider that there are many people in this district who would wish to go to Assam. Labour is becoming scarce locally and the wages are increasing everywhere. The ordinary daily wage of an unskilled labourer is 2½ annas. The new railway is paying 3 annas, and a man working by the piece can easily earn as much as 5 annas. Among our people there are not many who go outside the district for work; some go to the Calcutta side and the Duars but not in considerable numbers. I do not think there is much chance of their going to Assam. One of the chief reasons for this is the way they are taken to Assam. People are deceived and got out of the district and only then find that they are bound for Assam. This deception has a great deal to do with the unpopularity of Assam. Even if steps are taken to counteract this deception, it will take many years before the bad impression disappears. Another reason for the unpopularity of Assam is that the emigrant has to go for a fixed term of years and work on a certain garden. People go readily enough to the Duars, as they say they need stay only as long as they like and can go to another garden if they wish to. In Assam also if a coolie gets sick, it is no matter, he has still to go on working. I do not mean serious sickness of course. All this I have heard from the country people. Another thing is that people rarely come back. The place has also the name of being unhealthy. Even if the contract is withdrawn people will not willingly go to Assam. They know too much about it and would not believe it. I do not know about the working of the Emigration Act sufficiently to give an opinion of the different methods employed under it. All I know is that registration is most necessary. Even with registration there are complaints of people being taken away under wrong names. I would always keep registration.

No. 18.—Rev. Father Van Hecke, S. J., *R. C. Mission, Ranchi.*

I have been 17 years in Ranchi, for 16 of which I lived in the interior at Karra. Most of the people about Karra go to the Duars, very few go to Assam. They go to the Duar perfectly freely. They do not go to Assam, because there they are not as free as in the Duars. If a man in the Duars is not feeling very well he need not work; in Assam he has to work whether he feels well or not, provided he is not seriously ill. The people also think that

Ranchi. Assam is not so healthy as the Duars. There is further a prevailing idea that coolies are better treated on the Duars gardens than in Assam. The current in my part of the district is towards the Duars, it will be very difficult to turn it. Once give a place a bad name, and people will never believe anything good about it. Whatever security may be given for their good treatment in Assam, people will not believe it, they have been cheated so often. The people who go to the Duars stay ordinarily not more than one or two years. Many come back in six months. There is steady going and coming; they generally go after the harvest in December-January, and come back for the rainy season after earning a little money. Perhaps, if labourers went up to Assam and were allowed to come back after a working season and found they were quite comfortable there, there might be some flow of labour towards Assam. But it would be unsafe to prophesy that this would be the case. So few people come back from Assam, many die there, the place is considered unhealthy, and people are afraid of it; it would certainly take some time for them to gain confidence about Assam.

Much good has been done in this district by the Act of 1901. I think that, if the Act were withdrawn and there were no contract in Assam, the coolie would still have some value in the recruiting district, and the arkati would be as ready to resort to malpractices for ₹10 as he now is for ₹40 or ₹50. I am of opinion that the Act should not be withdrawn. In this part of the country the people are of peculiar temper, they get angry very easily and run away from home. When they get cool they want to go home, but if, meantime, they have been sent off to Assam on the pretence of being taken to some place near Ranchi, what can they do? I think that many people are taken away in this way unwillingly. It is different where a whole family want to go, because they have no means of subsistence. The sardari recruiting, which aims at taking away the latter class, is better than the arkati system. I would like to see sardari recruiting encouraged and arkati recruiting discouraged. But I would have registration all the same.

No. 19.—Rev. Father A. Hoffmann, S. J., *Sarwada, Ranchi District.*

In 1900, when at Sarwada I wrote a note about recruiting abuses in Ranchi. I have been 14 or 15 years in this district. The Act of 1901 has diminished abuses connected with recruiting. Recruiting is absolutely forbidden in the four thanas—Tamar, Khunti, Chakardharpur and Torpa. I do not know whether this includes sardari recruiting, but the reason for the prohibition given was that the tract was being too much depopulated. There are no abuses in connection with emigration to the Duars. If Assam were put on the same footing as the Duars and there were no penal contract of any kind in Assam, I think that there would be no revival of abuses but that you would get very few coolies. As long as the coolie has a money value there will be abuses. If Act VI of 1901 is repealed there will be a row: the people have had a respite for five years and they will not stand the arkati again, they will not submit to it as they did before. I consider the situation would be very serious.

The Mundas are very impulsive and sensitive, young people often run away from home, after getting a scolding about something; the arkati gets hold of them; before they get to Assam they repent of what they have done; I consider it immoral to keep such persons to their contract. There is no surplus population here to go to Assam; whatever system you follow you cannot get the former supply of labour from Chota Nagpur. Assam has a bad name with the people; they say that if you go to Assam you do not know how to get out. People go to Calcutta or the Duars for 6 months or a year and return; but the inducements to go in this way to Assam are not sufficient and the journey is too long and expensive. I am quite certain that it would lead to all the old abuses if Cachar were put on the footing of the Duars and recruiting for it were free from all supervision, while at the same time the penal contract were maintained in Assam.

There is a general complaint in the villages that servants cannot be found to do the field work, land has to lie fallow for want of cultivators. Before the settlement the Mundas were very slow to extend cultivation owing to uncertainty of title; since the settlement it is incredible to what extent cultivation is spreading. I speak specially of the Mundas in the three thanas of Tamar, Khunti and Chakardharpur, which were formerly the paradise of the recruiters. The new railway to Ranchi will employ much labour; extensive Government buildings are to be built and new industries will spring up. In Ranchi wages, when I first came, were 7 pice; now the lowest is 10 pice and I believe that they will rise to 4 annas before a year is passed. No one will now work for 2 annas in an out-of-the-way place like Bandgaon. Very few coolies return from Assam, and those who do generally come back with nothing: a man who leaves home to work, generally does so with the intention of saving some money and returning home with it. You cannot get a common youth as a servant in the villages for less than ₹4-8 a month. The crucial objection still remains that return from Assam is improbable or uncertain. People might go on a one year contract on ₹10 a month to Assam, if you could get them to believe the offer genuine. But it would be slow work; several batches would have to go and do it and come back before confidence was restored.

I should be willing to see the experiment tried of Government withdrawing from all interference with Assam labour both in the recruiting districts and in Assam; that is, labour and recruiting must both be absolutely free. There may be abuses for a year or two but things would very soon shake down; the Assam employer would be compelled to recruit and treat his labour in the same way as other employers do. Doubtless the Assam planter

would have to pay higher wages than other employers because of the reputation of Assam for unhealthiness. I am afraid, however, that the existence of Act XIII and Section 492, Indian Penal Code, may give the coolie a money value even if Act VI of 1901 were abolished, and if he has a money value there will, of course, be abuses. **Ranchi.**

Sardars do not *phuslao* so much or so successfully as the arkatis; under a pure sardari system the crop of coolies will be very small. I would by all means retain the registration of sardari coolies.

Written statement put in by Father Hoffmann on 24th February 1906.

I have always been of opinion that all special legislation in connection with the recruitment of labour for Assam should be done away with.

The reasons on which I based that opinion are as follows:—

(1) Considering the intellectual status and moral character of the average Chota Nagpur aborigines, the contracts these emigrants are at present submitted to are in all cases a heavy weight on the labourers; in very many cases they are hardly fair and in many they are altogether unjustifiable, not to say immoral.

(2) The security these contracts give planters against promptly losing deluded immigrants makes it worth the while to put a high premium on getting a great number of people to sign these contracts.

(3) This premium becomes an irresistible temptation to a large class of loose characters to interfere (*a*) with the personal liberty of men and women, (*b*) with the rights of parents over their children, and (*c*) with the rights of married people, to an extent amounting to nothing less than an abominable trade, called by the Kols "man-selling," which in some of its aspects is quite as bad, in some almost worse, than genuine slave trade.

(4) It consequently gives a horrid reputation to the Assam tea gardens among the population of the recruiting districts.

(5) It screws up the price of labour eventually to figures which, whilst really high, are nevertheless not a remuneration for the labour itself, but are to a great extent a real premium on crime, for a great part of the planters' money goes into the pockets of individuals whose acts cannot be qualified by any other name.

I have been under the impression that, if these contracts were done away with, two effects would follow by themselves, *viz*:—

(1) Recruiting as carried on with all its abuses would die out by itself for want of food.

(2) The amount of money now spent on recruiting would find its way naturally to those who really deserve it, *viz.*, the immigrant labourers. The employers, I supposed, would be both able and willing to increase the wages of the labourers to such an extent as to really attract genuine free immigration. I therefore proposed the repeal of all special legislation solely inasmuch as I considered it would be productive of this two-fold effect.

I did not consider the fact, that, in case all special legislation were repealed, the common law would still allow planters to subject labourers to another contract under Act XIII of 1859 or Section 492, Indian Penal Code. The extensive use of that power by the employers would eventually prove a suicidal policy. But if the employers do not clearly realize this fact and intend making even a moderately extensive use of it, I have no doubt that the repeal of Act VI of 1901 would for a time bring back all the abuses and all the horrors of the arkati system in a very acute form, because the aborigines here would no longer enjoy the protection of that Act, and it is not easy to foresee the disastrous effects this sudden and intense recrudescence of the evil may have on the recruiting districts.

I therefore withdraw the opinion I gave as to the desirability of withdrawing all special legislation. The Act of 1901 ought to remain in full force until the Assam employers have fully made up their minds not to avail themselves of the above-mentioned section of the Penal Code. I think it is a clear and bounden duty to protect the aborigines both against themselves and against the arkatis until circumstances arise which will do away with the recruiting system. Such circumstances could, I think, be brought about gradually, chiefly by diminishing the length of the present contracts, by an adequate increase of wages and above all by practically demonstrating to the labourers that they are, not theoretically and legally, but practically and *de facto*, free, entirely free to return to their own country when their short contracts are over, if they really desire to do so.

In conclusion I beg to specify more clearly one of the statements I made before the Committee. I said that there was not only no overpopulation but that there was actually not labour enough in the country for cultivation, that this scarcity is felt all the more since the present settlement had given a strong impulse to converting waste lands into rice fields owing to the security of titles conferred on the people by the settlement. I wish it to be understood that I made this particular statement specially with reference to the Khuntkati area. It would therefore appear absolutely necessary that that area—the thanas of Khunti, Tamar and Chakardharpur—remain, as they are now, closed against arkati recruitment even under the provisions of the Act of 1901.

Ranchi. 23RD FEBRUARY 1906.

No. 20.—MR. T. S. MACPHERSON, I.C.S., *Joint Magistrate, Ranchi.*

I have been in Ranchi for 18 months. During the absence of the Deputy Commissioner from head-quarters, I am *ex-officio* Superintendent of Emigration, which means that during practically the whole of the recruiting season I am in charge. I estimate that about 2,000 coolies a year emigrate to Assam. Last year the number of registered emigrants, including dependants, was 1,186, of whom 1,081 were recruited by garden sardars, and 105 by contractors. The balance I estimate to have been sent irregularly, *viz.*, smuggled out to Purulia, Midnapur or Burdwan districts. If coolies smuggled from Native States through Ranchi were included, the number would be much greater. I consider the arkati system, both licensed and unlicensed, to be a very bad one. In the first place it demoralises the sardars by inducing them to sell their coolies; and as the people who work the arkati system are a very low class, the sardar is apt to imitate their methods, which are both irregular and disastrous. The number of coolies recruited regularly by contractors last year was less than 9 per cent. of the total number of coolies registered, so I do not consider that the benefits accruing from the dual system of recruitment at all compensate for the demoralisation it causes. Another point against the arkati system is the disproportionate number of labourers to dependants sent by contractors. For instance, last season, with 61 labourers sent to Lakhimpur district, there was only one dependant, while, with 309 labourers recruited by garden sardars for the same district, there were 140 dependants: For Darrang district, contractors sent 34 coolies with 9 dependants, whereas sardars sent to that district 192 coolies with 102 dependants. This year, up to date, there have been only four contractors' coolies registered.

I do not think that there is labour in this district available for Assam in increasing numbers except in time of famine. It is a mistake to believe that the Ranchi district has a surplus population, especially in the Munda country. There is, moreover, a large local field for all the labour available. You cannot get a coolie to work in a private garden in Ranchi for less than R4-8. At Bundu, we can only get chaukidars for R4 with the greatest difficulty. Coolies also go to the coal fields, and the competition of the Duars is very great. In fact, the Duars people are now obtaining labour from the Munda area, from which Assam used mainly to draw. The lac factories at Bundu and Ranchi take a good deal of labour. Babu Thakur Dass, B.A., a contractor here, informs me that at Ranchi and Bundu a man employed on crushing and washing lac makes R8 per month, while the pay of a man employed on lac melting ranges from R11 to R16. A woman employed on cleaning lac makes R3-8, while on melting lac she can make from R6 to R16. The record-of-rights in this district will have the effect of preventing *maliks* from ousting ryots arbitrarily, so the latter will stick to their holdings. Rents also are fairly moderate. There are, however, many people in this district who would go readily enough to Assam, provided the inducements were greatly increased. Plenty would emigrate temporarily for one or two seasons, if they were sure of making money and getting back again, for the Munda likes to stick to his land, and the same applies to the Oraon. They go to the Duars, because the journey is easy, and they can get back when they like. If coolies were allowed to get back to their homes freely, I think they would very probably return again to Assam. The promise of a grant of land would induce people to emigrate and settle in Assam, but I am not sure whether, if they had to serve a term in a tea garden before getting the land, it would have the same effect; I think, however, it would. If a Munda gets land, he will take his friends up afterwards. Thanas Silli, Tamar and Khunti are open only to sardari recruiting under Chapter IV, but arkatis smuggle coolies out of these areas, and pass them on to recruiters outside.

If the Committee have found at Asansole that a good many of the coolies recruited by the free contractors there come from this district, I am sure they have been smuggled out. The contractors and their recruiters keep up connection with local *badmashes* in the villages here, to whom they pay a good price for any coolie they can smuggle out. My opinion is that so long as Midnapur and Burdwan centres are open to free recruiting, such smuggling of coolies is bound to go on. Many of the people they get are taken out under the idea that they are going to the Duars, but when they get to Raniganj and find out their mistake, they are threatened by the contractors' people, and made to agree to go to Assam. I have a case on my file at present concerning two girls who were got down to Purulia by an unlicensed arkati, sent on to Asansole, and shipped off to Dibrugarh. A complaint was lodged about their disappearance, and after much trouble the girls have been traced, and are now being brought back from Assam by a Sub-Inspector of Police. The two girls were passed through Mr. G. P. Cooke's depot at Asansole. Cases of this kind are by no means uncommon. I have had complaints of women running away to the Duars, but these are mostly love affairs, and in quite a different category to the cases which occur in respect of Assam. Such cases are quite apart from emigration. There is a regular system of smuggling coolies from the Native States lying to the west of Chota Nagpur, and a good many of the coolies recruited at Raniganj are obtained from these areas. I am not in favour of the extension of Section 90 to the Ranchi district. I think Government should exercise a paternal care over the people as they are not fit to take care of themselves. For this district, the only form of recruitment which I would recognize is recruitment by garden sardars with registration.

When Act VI is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, coolies recruited, say for Sylhet, will be taken out of the district and shipped off to the Assam Valley. People here do not know

the difference between the two Valleys, and if they did, pressure would be brought upon them to go to the Assam Valley. I do not see how difficulties can be prevented if there is a dual system of recruitment, *viz.*, free for the Surma Valley and under the Act for the Assam Valley. As a matter of fact the recruitment for the Surma Valley at present is entirely through sardars. **Ranchi.**

My opinion is that the abolition of Act VI of 1901 will not furnish a remedy against the arkati. Labour for Assam will always be scarce and difficult to obtain, and will therefore be at a premium, and it will always be worth an arkati's while to get people for Assam. Even if the planters agreed to work without Section 492, Indian Penal Code, and Act XIII of 1859, I think a coolie would still have a value in Assam. In my opinion, Assam recruitment must always be controlled by legislation. First, there is the long and expensive journey which the coolie cannot undertake of himself, nor can he return unless his expenses are paid. Once in Assam, he is always worth the cost of his transport. Assam must always be on the footing of the colonies with controlled emigration. In the second place the people of the district are too ignorant to be allowed to enter into contracts for service in Assam without supervision.

There is an intense and wide-spread detestation among the people of this district to going to Assam, due firstly to the malpractices of arkatis and sardars demoralised by contact with arkatis, secondly to the idea of "selling" which is the word always used with regard to Assam, and thirdly to the loss of respectability among the relations of people who have gone to Assam. Another matter is the contract, people in this district hate a contract. Any time they have touched a stamped paper, they have generally been done. In the police it is difficult to get Oraons and Mundas to enlist because they have to serve for three years. There is, further, the inadequate pay, in the face of keen competition for labour, both in this district and in the Duars and other places. Men who go to the Calcutta side return after six months with ₹30. So long as they can get labour near their doors with good remuneration and can spend the rains at home, they will not go to Assam. People who return from Assam complain of ill-treatment and arrest, and this also renders the idea of Assam unpopular. It will take a long course of straight dealing—particularly of straight recruitment—to remove the distaste for emigration to Assam, and the first step to be taken is to abolish the contractor in this district and in the surrounding districts to which smuggling takes place.

No. 21.—Mr. T. C. Simpson, *Tea Planter, Ranchi.*

I am Manager of the Assam Frontier Tea Company's gardens in Ranchi. I have had 20 years' experience of Assam and have been here for 6 years. I am also Local Agent for my own Company here.

In my opinion there is a large field for labour for Assam here. People would go freely if they were allowed to. They do not go because of the new Act with its police enquiries and the necessity for producing lawful guardians. The sardars are now frightened to bring people in. The new Act was intended to help sardari recruiting and stop the abuses of the arkati system, but as worked the same restrictions have been imposed on sardari recruiting as on arkati. I refer to Sections 9 and 34. In the case of arkati coolies the lawful guardian of a single woman has to be produced. This is not required by Section 9 in the case of sardars, but it is insisted on. This procedure is applied not only in the case of single women but young married couples. People are put back for inquiries by the police; this causes delay. I have known of cases where coolies have turned unwilling during the delay.

My experience is that Upper Assam cannot be worked without an Act containing provisions for a penal contract. But if the Act were done away with in the recruiting districts, there would be ample labour forthcoming. By that I mean free recruiting by sardars, with strict control over contractors. That is, I would retain the Act for contractor recruiting, and put all contractors everywhere under license. I think I would get quite sufficient labour for my Company in the recruiting districts under such a free sardari system, that is under a system such as that provided for by Section 90 of the Act.

I do not think that the knowledge of his having to enter into a contract would deter a man from going freely. The tea industry in Upper Assam could never do without a contract, at least that is what I think. If there were no contract, the planter would not close his garden, he would have to raise the coolie's pay or give him a bonus to stay on the garden. He would save the price he now pays for his labour and add it to the coolie's pay. One result would be that popular gardens would have an advantage in the matter of labour, as the labour would tend to go to the good gardens, and the unpopular ones would suffer. The coolies now sent through me are all put under contract. Not 3 per cent. take under a four years' contract; the remainder are all quite ready to go for four years. I got about 1 coolie per sardar two years ago and last year 0·7 per sardar. The abolition of enquiries under Section 9 would not of itself do much to increase the supply, but it would have the indirect effect of restoring confidence among the sardars. I do not think there is any wide-spread feeling against emigration to Assam in this district, I have seen no signs of it. I admit that the arkati has done much to damage recruitment and make it unpopular. If the arkati is got rid of, this feeling would disappear.

If Cachar and Sylhet are not under the Act, and the planters there are going to use arkatis, it will affect us. If the Cachar people will work the same as the Duars people do,

Ranchi. there will be no trouble. If an unlicensed recruiter starts work nominally for Cachar and Sylhet, but sends his coolies instead to Assam, the dangers of the arkati system will still exist.

I do not think there is any absconding from the garden among sardari coolies. Most of the sardari coolies go up to join their families there.

No. 22.—Mr. C. R. Duggan, *District Engineer in charge of Construction, Purulia-Ranchi Railway, Ranchi.*

I have been about 2 months on the construction work here, the Railway having just been begun. We are having no trouble about labour; we are getting plenty of local people. We have imported a certain amount of labour from Chhattisgarh. The local man earns about 3 annas a day, the Chhattisgarhi 3½ to 4 annas. There is an ample local supply, and we should not import but for the fact that the local man does not work steadily and come at proper hours. These rates are for daily wages. The people have not got accustomed to piece-work yet. Once they do, they should earn up to 4½ annas a day. It is not that the people are too well off to take piece-work, it is that they are contented with the daily rate combined with a certain amount of freedom in earning it. The railway construction will last about 18 months. When work gets in full swing, we shall take all the labour there is to be got in the district.

I have been for some years in districts from which labour is got for Assam. The opinion I have always heard expressed is that emigration to Assam is unpopular. It is regarded as a form of slavery, and it is a way of frightening a man to say that if he does not be careful he may be caught for the tea gardens. A coolie on a gang who does not stick to his work gets this thrown at him by the ganger to get him to mend his ways.

No. 23.—Rev. John Seni Law, *S. P. G. Mission, Ranchi District.*

I am priest of Tapara parish. I am a native of this district. I visited the districts of Cachar, Goalpara and Lakhimpur many years ago. There are plenty of people in this district who would go to Assam. The reasons why they do not go are, firstly, that for the last three years they have been emigrating to the western Duars where there is free labour; secondly, because of the survey and land settlement which is going on, as they have lands here in which the settlement has confirmed their rights, and they fear that if they leave while the settlement is proceeding they may forfeit their rights; thirdly, because of the rise in the price of lac in recent years. These facts I have learned from garden sardars and others who have come back from the Assam Valley and Cachar, trying to recruit labour.

Emigration to Assam is generally popular with the people. People do not return from Assam with savings now-a-days, but formerly a good deal of money was remitted. They complain that tasks in tea gardens have been raised with the result that they are unable to earn as much as formerly.

Since the framing of Act VI of 1901 there are no abuses in connection with recruiting here. Since then I have not heard of people being smuggled out of the district. I see no objection to the licensed contractor's system in force in this district.

To popularise emigration to Assam, I would recommend the grant of land to coolies after having served their time in tea gardens. That would attract labour. I think also higher pay should be offered, as now-a-days people can earn good pay locally by working on railways, etc. They dislike giving contracts too. They go freely to the Duars where there are none. Very few people return from Assam, I think the country would be more popular if more people returned.

The condition of the coolies on the tea gardens which I visited in Assam was good, but those who return here are generally poor.

The people of this district do not know the difference between the Assam Valley, Sylhet and Cachar. They class them together and prefer emigration to the Duars.

No. 24.—Rev. Dr. Nottrott, *German Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Ranchi.*

I have been 39 years in the Ranchi district. Labour in Assam is popular with the people of this district. The Assam planters do not get as much labour as they wish—

1st—because of the four-year contract,

2nd—at present, because of the settlement which is in progress, people have to stay to assert their claims to land.

I would propose to take no contract at all, but if an advance were given to a coolie which he had to work off, many people would go. They would make no objection to being liable to imprisonment if they absconded before working off an advance. A family is in debt: one or two members of the family would gladly go to work in Assam if the family debts were cleared off by the advances received by those who emigrated.

Ranchi.

An emigrant who goes taking an advance, as I propose, would still be registered before the magistrate. Government supervision of recruiting is absolutely necessary. I would fix no term for the contract. The coolie would have to work off the advance, it would be deducted from his wages; the precise terms would be a matter of arrangement. I think that after the settlement is over a large supply of labour could be obtained, but it would take some time for the people to get acquainted with the system. I do not think it would be wise to put Assam on the footing of the Duars because the journey is so much more expensive. Even for the Duars coolies take advances. I was in Assam last year in Jorhat and Tezpur to see the Mission stations there; our people live on the gardens and in the bastis. I have had no complaint at all from our people working on the gardens; I thought them very well off. Our Mission has about 60,000 adherents in this district; I should be willing to see more of our people going to Assam. Last year I wanted to send wives to some of our young men in Assam; I asked Mr. Johnson, local agent, to allow one of his sardars to take away the girls; I was told that the sardar could not take unregistered persons. I did not want them registered. The Joint Magistrate also told me that I must send some one who was not a sardar with them. I was not sending the girls to a garden; the prospective husbands were living in a basti as free cultivators. I should be willing to make an arrangement with a manager and send him coolies from among my Christians on terms approved by me outside the Act. I should be glad to have an exemption from the Act for my Mission and work such an arrangement.

People are frightened of arkatis but not of Assam. I do not think that the fear of arkatis has kept people from going to Assam. If arkatis are uncontrolled much wrong will be done; I am not in favour of arkatis at all. Sardari recruiting is unobjectionable. The work of Mr. Leslie, the local agent here, meets with my approval. I think that a respectable European is required to supervise the garden sardars. Registration is necessary for greater security; I do not think that registration frightens people from going to Assam, on the contrary it gives them confidence to know that the *sarkar* sanctions the contract. The Assam Christians whom I went to visit have land both under Government and under the tea-gardens; they went originally as garden coolies. People would be induced to go to Assam if they were promised land after serving a term on the tea garden. I should be glad to see larger members of my Native Christians going up to Assam on these terms. I hand in a translation of part of an article I wrote in our Hindi paper describing my visit to Assam, and also a letter from a coolie describing his life on a tea garden. I published them to show our converts what life on a garden in Assam was really like.

In spite of registration I find that sardars *phuslao* away young women. I think that at present enquiries are not sufficiently thorough at the time of registration.

Extract from an account published by Rev. Dr. Nottrott in Mission newspaper, the "Gharbandhu."

The manager of the Borjuli Tea estate kindly granting us permission to visit the coolies in his lines, we went there and found 5 families of our Mission. The next day we went to the Sonajuli estate where also there were some Christian families. * * * I enquired in both places about the details of their condition and it appeared to me that they were all well treated and well taken care of by their European managers and that they had nothing to murmur at nor any one to complain against. * * * The coolies are not overworked, they get a certain amount of work to do in a day. I have seen some coolies return home after finishing their work by 10 or 11 A.M., and then they stay at home for the rest of the day to do their private work.

Although rice is generally sold in Assam at 8 seers per rupee, yet the coolies were supplied with it at the rate of 13 seers per rupee, the price being deducted from their wages weekly or monthly.

In the plucking season children also are engaged in contract work and sometimes the earnings of a family amount to 15 annas per day. In spite of this easy road to fortune many coolies remain as poor as ever, because they squander their money in liquor drinking, but those who are not addicted to this vice soon become well-to-do.

The impression I got in Borjuli and Sonajuli, I got in all the other tea-gardens I saw. In Hilika and the gardens of its neighbourhood are 500 Christians belonging to our Mission. All seemed to be happy and no complaint of any kind was heard.

* * * * * *

I am quite pleased with what I heard and saw in Assam, and considering the cheering condition of the Mundas and Oraons there, I think poor people ought to go and live in Assam where their temporal condition will be very much improved. Those who will settle in the Government *bastis* will have to pay no *bethegari*, suffer no harassment of law-suits and no oppression of the zemindars and others. The enemy that the Mundas encounter in Chota Nagpur may be met in Assam, and it is the grogshop. Whoever will keep aloof from it will not fall into its snares, and a faithful Christian will no doubt overcome this foe of his nation and soon will become well-to-do.

Extract from a letter written by Nirbandh Soye of Tetardumri tea garden published in the "Gharbandhu."

Nirbandh Soye of Tetardumri tea garden requests the favour of the Editor of the "*Gharbandhu*" to publish the following letter in his newspaper :—

"I beg to inform you that Christian residents of Tetardumri tea garden are by the mercy of God in good state of health. I, Nirbandh Soye of Joyartonang, was a school-master at Bajigama for two years. I obtained my pay for the first year but in the second only 5 boys out of 12 paid me. So the school was abolished and I resolved to go abroad. In 1903 I came with Lengo, brother of Paulus, to Assam where I am now living. I intend hereby to give my ignorant brethren in Chota Nagpur some idea of the railway and steamer journey and of the work that is done in tea gardens. I shall write in future more.

* * * * * *

There are two systems of work in the garden, *viz.*, half-day work and whole-day work. In the first system the work for the day is measured out and in the second it is not measured. The whole-day working time is

Ranchi. from 8 A.M. to 4 P. M. and the work is very easy—weak persons do this work ; but the half-day contract work requires strength and strong persons do this work ; this work is spading the soil. When the soil is hard the square for digging is measured by 15 *nals*, and when the soil becomes softer the length of the square is increased by 2 *nals* but the breadth is not changed. In the rainy season 35 *nals*, are spaded. We work both in the forenoon and the afternoon. During the rainy season we spade 35 *nals* in the forenoon and 20 *nals* in the afternoon. The wages for 35 *nals* spading are paid monthly while those for 20 *nals* are paid weekly. On the 1st of every month each man and woman gets 20 seers of rice, the price of which (R1-8) is deducted on the day of payment. We thank God that even this large quantity of land we can spade up in an hour or an hour and a half and then we return to our houses and do our own work. Women also do the spading when the soil is soft. Their squares are 12 or 15 *nals*. The plucking of the leaves begins in March and April. At first only two leaves are plucked from above a foot from the ground. The rule for plucking is 7 seers a day; but in Aghan (November) if the plucking exceeds 7 seers the extra weight is paid for at half-anna per seer. This extra work is paid for weekly but the regular work of 7 seers is paid for monthly. In this season the spading is not done, all men, women and children are engaged in plucking work, the extra workers earn R2 or R3 weekly by extra work. At this time three leaves are plucked at a time. In the plucking season the engine whistles at 8 A.M. and 4 P.M. With 50 men, women and children I prepare tea in the factory.

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In short the work in the Tetardumri garden is much easier than in other gardens. In other gardens work begins at 5 A. M. while we begin our work at 8 A. M. We get leave on Sundays to attend church. I thank God that He has brought me to such a good garden.

In conclusion, I, Nirbandh, and all the Christians of this garden offer our salutations to our dear brethren Mundas and Oraons in Chota Nagpur.

24TH FEBRUARY 1906.

No. 25.—MR. JOHN LESLIE, *Local Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, for the Districts of Ranchi and Palamau.*

I have been acting as a local agent for the last 15 years, all of which time I have spent in the Palamau and Ranchi districts. I think that there is ample labour in both these districts for emigration to Assam and that we should get 2,000 coolies a year from them. Since the framing of Act VI, the number of emigrants has greatly decreased. I attribute this chiefly to the strictness of the provisions of Act VI, owing to which sardars are afraid to bring in people for registration. They seem to fear the enquiries made at the time of registration. The enquiries regarding single women are very strict; suspicious cases are often remanded for enquiry by the police and people do not like the police visiting their houses. I cannot say that the enquiries are unduly strict except in the case of a single woman or of a man accompanying a single woman and said to be her husband. It is not so much that single women themselves are frightened off, but the enquiries alarm others who might wish to emigrate. We only recruited $\frac{3}{4}$ of an adult coolie per sardar last season. Another cause for the poor recruiting results is the settlement which has been going on for the last three or four years, as people do not like to leave their land while the settlement is in progress lest they should be ousted. Crops also have been good. Competition for labour in Calcutta and elsewhere has been in existence for years, but I cannot say whether coolies go now in larger numbers to those places than they used to do. I have not the least doubt but that sardari coolies are enticed away by arkatis. Within the last few days a case has occurred of 15 sardari coolies, out of a batch of 37 placed under contract at Daltonganj, being found missing at Asansole and afterwards discovered in a free contractor's depot at Howrah. These coolies had actually been put under contract at Daltonganj and were on their way to Assam. I can cite no specific instance of sardars having sold their coolies to contractors before registration ; I have no doubt but that it does take place. I do not think that a higher wage or a reduction in the term of the contract would make any difference in the numbers prepared to go to Assam. I think, however, that more coolies might perhaps come forward if there were no contract.

The general impression is that Assam is unpopular. It has a bad name and this is due to the old malpractices of arkatis. There is no doubt but that even now many coolies are smuggled out to non-notified districts. The closing of thanas Silli, Tamar and Khunti to arkati recruiting has made no appreciable difference in the number of coolies obtained by sardars.

There have been cases of sardari coolies being registered under wrong names. When the Missionaries complain to me about any intending emigrant, I send the people over to them if they are in my place of accommodation. A considerable number of coolies return at the expiry of their four years' contract, but I cannot say what percentage. Managers frequently remit to me the savings of time-expired coolies for payment to them here. From R20 to R100 per coolie and over is frequently sent to me, and I have had as much as R200 sent to me for payment to a returned coolie. I know also that a number of returned coolies come to me to be sent back to their old gardens. I have not tried generally publishing information that coolies might enter into a contract for any less period than four years which they might desire. I could not do so without specific instructions from managers. I frequently make advances to emigrants, as much as R30 or R40. The coolie understands that this is given as an advance and must be worked off, but I cannot say whether the advances are actually recovered. Sardars, as a rule, do not stay here for more than four months. A large percentage, quite 10 per cent. of them, abscond with their advances. Sardars are always under contract

under Act VI or Act XIII. I find it very difficult to recover absconders. When I do catch one I prosecute him under Section 170 of Act VI of 1901. **Ranchi.**

I do not think that the construction of the new Railway will appreciably affect recruiting for Assam. I know that a batch of local tea garden coolies left to work on the railway the other day, but returned.

I do not think the red coat which coolies get is disliked, but depots are unpopular as being synonymous with Assam. I do not think that tea gardens can send down a better class of man as sardar than at present. Sardars, as a rule, recruit their relatives or fellow-villagers. Occasionally they bring in people of a different caste. I always send sardars to their own villages in charge of one of my peons whom I employ to keep an eye on the sardars. There is a great disparity in the success of individual sardars in obtaining coolies. The ordinary rule is for gardens to offer sardars a bonus on each coolie they recruit. I have had no complaints from sardars of not having been paid the bonus they were promised. I cannot say that I have particularly questioned sardars on this point.

If Act VI were abolished the price of coolies would fall, but they would still have a value sufficient to tempt the arkati to employ illegal means of recruitment. The existence of Act XIII and Section 492, Indian Penal Code, would tend to give the coolie a price. Even without a contract under any of these provisions of the law, a coolie once landed on a tea-garden in Assam and unable to return to his country would have value. I know that planters in the Duars pay recruiters ₹5 to ₹10 for introducing a recruit. I think that the withdrawal of the Act from Cachar and Sylhet will give these districts a great advantage over the Assam Valley in the matter of recruiting. When the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley there would be a great danger of coolies recruited nominally for that Valley being sent to the Assam Valley at some point on the way up. I know that sardari coolies of this district understand the difference between the two Valleys, as they know where they are going, but I cannot say whether the ordinary villager knows this difference.

I do not think the promise of land after four years' residence in a garden would appreciably increase emigration, as the period is too remote. It would help a little towards recruiting if people on gardens would keep up a correspondence with their relatives here. It would be very advantageous if men are sent down as sardars at an early stage of their contract before they have lost touch with their villages I would be inclined to favour a system of giving good steady coolies, who have been working well on the gardens and saving money, return passes to their homes for two or three months. This might get over the complaint that labourers are lost sight of in Assam. The selection of such persons would have to be carefully made, and I think that if this were properly done they would return to Assam. Speaking of selection I consider there is much room for improvement in the selection of individual sardars. Some of the men sent down have been so long on the garden that they have lost all touch with their villages and some others are undesirable characters.

Section 90 is not in force either here or in Palamau, and I know nothing about its working.

No. 26.—Babu Saroda Kumar Aikhat, *Pleader, Ranchi.*

I have lived here more than 25 years. People would go freely to Assam if higher pay were given and certain conditions of the Act were removed. I believe that there are still people who want to go and work elsewhere. The pay should be at least ₹7 for a man and he should have a contract to work for only one year. If advances or a bonus were given to the emigrants it would be the strongest inducement to them to go to Assam; the money now paid to the recruiter should be paid to the coolie. This is the way the Duars Tea Companies now recruit. Timber sawyers go to Bonai and Gangpur taking advances and executing civil agreements. Circumstances have altered in this district and high pay must now be given to induce people to go to Assam. I know that coolies went to work on the Assam Bengal Railway executing contracts to work on the piece-work system, the rates being double that obtainable locally, and they went gladly. The term was as far as I recollect six months. Many coolies went from here to work on the Assam Bengal Railway. Many Babus took coolies from here and got commission on the work of the coolies they took with them. There were no abuses connected with recruiting this labour, but some of the coolies on returning complained they had not been paid in full.

I think that the arkati system should be abolished altogether; it has given the whole system a bad name. I know a village where the inhabitants were reduced to extreme poverty after fighting their landlord for 20 years but they still said that they would rather die than go to Assam. I do not trust the present licensed recruiters. Even a respectable contractor cannot control his subordinates, and it is more than can be expected that the ordinary contractor should send away a coolie who is brought to him. Recruiters select the most backward parts of the district and take advantage of family disputes to carry off people. A respectable Kol told me that the long term of service and the malpractices of the recruiters made Assam unpopular. I would assimilate Assam recruiting to recruiting for the Duars. The Duars planter sends an agent with money who makes advances to the coolies brought in by sardars, and the coolies then go off to the garden by themselves. I know some gentlemen who tried to recruit for the Duars through recruiters and the attempt failed. Some friends of mine tried to start such a recruiting agency in Hazaribagh, but the thing

Ranchi. fell through because it was unnecessary ; the coolies went to the Duars without the intervention of the agency. If there were no Act at all, I believe that recruiting would be satisfactory ; Act XIII of 1859 would serve all purposes. Coolies will go where they get the best wages. There is no fear of ill-treatment in Assam. I think that the arkati system would die out if the Act were abolished. The managers would soon find it cheaper to work without arkatis.

After the introduction of the free system the authorities might for a time keep a careful watch at the principal railway stations to check any temporary abuses. I believe that if the Act continues the results will be worse and worse for the tea industry. One or two respectable men are engaged in recruiting and this alone has prevented the whole system having died out long ago. As regards the terms of contract there should either be a piece-work system, or if the wages are monthly there should be no measurement ; the people do not understand the present combination of the two and dislike it. In this district 8 hours is the day's work and not 9 hours. The liability to imprisonment for breach of contract before leaving the recruiting district is very unpopular. Personally, I do not approve of the manager having power to arrest an absconding coolie under Section 195 of the Act. At any rate I would compel a manager to take a coolie when arrested to the magistrate and not to the police. A system of paying a headman of a gang of coolies by commission would probably work well.

No. 27.—Rev. Father M. Vandaele, S. J., *Khunti, Ranchi District.*

I reside at Khunti and have been in this district more than 8 years. Malpractices have decreased since the law was altered ; they have almost disappeared in the Khunti district. I am satisfied with the present state of affairs so far as this district is concerned. I do not think that from my part there will ever be a large supply of labour for Assam ; work is more easily obtained locally and this will be more and more the case when the railway is open. Most men who wish to go away and earn some money now go from my part to work as sawyers for the timber companies. At one time the underlings were allowed to swindle the sawyers and the people therefore refused to go. A manager asked me the reason and when I explained it he undertook to put matters on a proper footing, and after some years confidence was restored and the people now go freely. The Duars planters have also begun to recruit with some success in my district ; last year one manager got 15 coolies near Bandgaon. I believe that the Assam planter has spoilt his own recruiting by paying the arkati and not the coolie. If ₹120 were paid to the coolie and not to the arkati, labour could be obtained. A man with a sum like this could redeem a mortgage on his land and then go to the garden and work off his advance. The four-year contract is the chief thing that deters people from going to Assam, this and the low wages. I think it would be a good thing if the Act were withdrawn and labour were really free. No pressure must be applied in Assam to make people renew contracts there. If there were real freedom I do not think abuses would arise, and I believe that in the course of time a free flow of labour would be obtained. I would not recommend imprisoning a coolie who took an advance and then did not work it off. I think that the people are generally honest and would work off advances honestly. If Cachar and Sylhet are free and the Act is retained in Assam I believe that it would be possible for coolies to be nominally recruited for Cachar and when once outside their district forced into contracts for Assam. You can do anything with these *junglis* when once you have got them out of their own district. I have not heard of coolies being nominally recruited for the Duars and then conveyed to Assam, but I have often wondered why this is not done, and probably the Duars planters carefully protect the men recruited for them. The timber work is contract work, but I cannot now state the exact rates. The settlement now in progress is a reason against the people leaving the district at present. After the settlement is over some members of a family may still want to go away and earn money. The Mundas are improvident and largely in debt. The Munda does not like a contract which compels him to work whether he wishes or not. I have never heard any complaint about sardari recruiting under the present Act.

No. 28.—Babu R. M. Banerji, *Personal Assistant to the Commissioner of the Chota Nagpur Division, Ranchi.*

I have been in Ranchi for 3 years, and I have served for 11 years in this Division. I was Registering Officer at Purulia under the old Act. Purulia had a bad name in those days, but abuses have almost been done away with under the present Act. Coolies are still, however, smuggled from the Chota Nagpur districts, which are notified under Section 3, to Raniganj and Bankura in which there is free recruitment. There was official correspondence on this subject with the Deputy Commissioner of Manbhum and the matter was reported to Government. It was considered that specific instances should be got of the occurrence of such smuggling before remedial action could be taken. There is also extensive smuggling of coolies from the Native States adjoining Chota Nagpur. The Chiefs object to recruiting and punish recruiters whom they catch, but the smuggling goes on. These Native State coolies go to Raniganj, etc., as free coolies. There is a depot in Chaibassa for such Native State coolies.

I do not think that there is any prospect of increased emigration to Assam from the Chota Nagpur districts. The local labour market is brisk, and there is much demand for labour both locally and in the surrounding districts, particularly at the coal mines. Assam is not popular with the people of these parts; it is looked upon as another world from which nobody comes back. People go freely towards Calcutta for work and return with savings. It is different with Assam, people do not return after serving out their term. If people were allowed to come back after their contract is done, that would popularize emigration. I think that labour in Assam must be more liberally paid also, to correspond with the rise in the price of labour elsewhere. The people who go to the Calcutta side get 5 or 6 annas a day; against this Assam cannot compete so long as the present statutory wage exists. **Ranchi.**

No. 29.—Babu Balkrishna Sahai, *Pleader, Ranchi.*

I have lived all my life here. Emigration to Assam is not popular with the people of this district: the reason is that those who go have to stay there for a very long time. If the coolies were allowed to return once a year and recruitment through contractors were abolished, emigration would be more popular; more garden sardars should be appointed. I think that the wages in Assam should be increased. I believe that the offer of land in Assam after the expiry of the contract would attract people. Wages in Ranchi have risen and are likely to rise more; coolies who used to work for 2 annas now ask 10 or 12 pice. Prices have risen and the standard of living is rising. The new railway will certainly lead to a rise in wages. The licensed recruiters are still guilty of malpractices; there are many which do not come to light. I believe that if the Act were completely abolished malpractices would increase. People do not like to go to Assam and so have to be induced to go by false promises: this is the difference between Assam and the Duars. Emigrants would pay something towards the fare if they were allowed to revisit their homes at intervals. I cannot say whether the offer of higher wages in Assam would induce people to go there in preference to the Duars. Registration of coolies will always be necessary to protect them.

PURULIA, 26th February 1906. **Purulia.**

No. 30.—Captain Fleming, I.S.M.D., *Civil Surgeon, Purulia.*

I have been over 2 years at Purulia; and about 15 years ago I was for 8 or 9 months at Hazaribagh. Railways, coal mines and cultivation supply sufficient employment in this district for the local population. There has been a great extension of the coal industry in Jherriah and Katras. The Grand Chord line from Barakar to Topchansi absorbs much labour; it is now under construction and the earth-work is practically finished. I have never had an emigrant object to going to Assam for four years. The contract protects the labourer as much as the employer. I do not believe that any emigrants are deterred by the long contract.

Those who come before me for registration seem quite pleased at the idea of going to Assam. Returned coolies have given me a good account of the country. Emigration is increasing in this district since Act VI of 1901 was passed. The statement below gives the exact figures:—

Year.	Under Chapter III.	Under Chapter IV.	Under Section 90.	Total.
1902-03	472	304	...	776
1903-04	473	548	48	1,069
1904-05	363	744	162	1,269
1905-06 up to 25th February 1906	367	361	108	836

The Act retarded emigration at first, but now people understand it. Assam is not unpopular, but I have never made enquiries in the villages about this. If a contractor brings up a single woman, a witness has to be produced to prove that she has no guardian. The same is done with sardari coolies and if a woman professes to be the wife of a sardar proof of this has to be produced. If I am satisfied that a sardar is really the guardian of a woman coolie, I make no enquiry. I have never ordered a police enquiry, I simply remand the coolie for the production of the necessary evidence. We are not so strict with sardari coolies as with contractors' coolies. This year and last year some families have gone up to Assam with the intention of settling for good, they have an idea that they will get rent-free land. I think that a promise of repatriation at the expiry of the contract would attract more labour. Many of the coolies who now go up are those who have lost their land, and a promise of land, revenue-free for a time after the expiry of their contract, would be a powerful attraction to such men. I consider that the present pay is handsome. A lot of money can be earned on the coal mines but the form of labour is unpopular. If Cachar gets its labour under Section 90 or 92 the pay would have to be raised in Assam to attract labour there in preference to Cachar. I think that Section 90 leads to no abuses. I am of opinion, however, that registration is good both for the sardar and coolie. Coolies are not now afraid to come before the registering officer; at first I understand they were afraid. I consider that the licensed recruiters are now properly controlled by the contractors. I have had no serious complaint for a year. I do not know personally about the smuggling of coolies out of this district. Two years ago there was a case of a contractor buying or stealing coolies from a sardari depot; the contractor's depot

Purulia. was closed. I have recently had a case of a sardar appropriating a registered contractor's coolie. I remember a case last year where two sardari coolies after registration were found being put under contract by a contractor. Emigration under Chapter IV is much more satisfactory than under Chapter III. I would not recommend that contractors be abolished because so many contractors would thereby lose their bread. The up-country arkati is the worst of the lot. I see no reason why emigration from this district should not go on increasing. The Mahtos and Bhumij are the most numerous castes among the emigrants.

No. 31.—Mr. A. Cooke, *Recruiting Agent, Empire of India & Ceylon Tea Company, Purulia.*

I have been connected with recruitment for Assam since 1890. I was at Ranchi till 1903 managing a tea garden and recruiting for the Assam Frontier Company. After a year I was employed by my present Company, and lived at Ranchi till October last when I came to Purulia. I hold a local agent's license here. It is now more difficult to get labour for Assam than it used to be. I ascribe this first to the restrictions of the Act, registration and the enquiries it involves. These enquiries deter intending emigrants. They go to the Duars instead. But the main cause is the competition of other industries, the Duars, the coal mines, reclamation in the Sunderbands, etc. These latter industries pay higher rates for their labour than Assam. I do not think that the construction of the Purulia-Ranchi Railway will have much effect on Assam emigration. I consider that the competition I have mentioned will always render it increasingly difficult to get labour for Assam. If the tea gardens raised the pay of the coolies, that might counteract the present tendency for people to prefer work nearer their doors. There is also the bad name of Assam; this is a proverb with the people. The bad name is given by creditors and landowners to prevent their debtors and ryots emigrating, and also by people who are afraid of losing members of their families. I do not think that the right of private arrest has anything to do with keeping people from going to Assam, nor does the four years' contract deter people, although with a shorter contract I believe more people would be got to go. I have heard that abuses formerly prevailed in connection with emigration. This may partly have had something to do with giving Assam its bad name. I do not know whether abuses still exist under the present Act.

I am in favour of retaining the present Act for Assam emigration, but with modifications. I would extend Section 90 to all districts. I am not in favour of free recruitment by contractors as at Raniganj; I consider that surveillance is required. There would still be a short supply of labour which must be met by employers increasing wages on the garden and improving the system of recruitment. By the latter I mean that employers should lay themselves out more to clearing off arrears of rent and debts due by intending emigrants. This would get the creditors and the zemindars and Government officials on the side of recruitment; they would be ready to point out likely people. I would not treat such payments as advances to be recovered from the coolies, but that is a matter for the employer of course. I consider that recruiting by contractors is essential to procuring a sufficient supply of labour for Assam so that people who have no relatives there may be induced to go, but all should work under license. I would license only such contractors as are applied for by employers and would abolish license fees.

The bulk of people go to Assam because they want to leave their country for good. They have no inducement to stay here and want to get away. I do not see that anything is to be gained by repatriation nor by any system of grant of leave with return passes. There might be a chance of tapping a fresh supply of labour by getting people to go to Assam for a year or two. I do not think, however, that it would pay the gardens. If the Act were withdrawn, I think that Assam would be on much the same footing as the Duars; but I do not consider it would be good either for Assam or for the coolie. I think an Act is desirable for other industries which are large employers of labour as well. I have not studied the question of the grant of land to time-expired labourers; I do not think there is much in the suggestion.

I think the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will be a distinct handicap on the Assam Valley if the latter is left under the Act. There will be no questions asked and anybody can go to Cachar and Sylhet. I consider that the old abuses are certain to spring up. Coolies will be deceived into going out of the recruiting districts and would then be smuggled into Assam.

Note handed in by witness on 27th February 1906.

Why should Assam be allowed to keep an Act not wanted by other districts or industries?

Because Assam has been "made" by the Act and can still afford to incur the heavy expenditure entailed by the rules.

If employers are allowed the option of importing free labour on condition that they do not give the coolies thus imported contracts under Act VI, the question will settle itself. I also think that free labourers who have served one year should be allowed to place themselves under Act VI to obtain the advantages of rice at R3 per maund, etc.

27TH FEBRUARY 1906. **Purulia.**

No. 32.—MR. A. W. COOK, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Manbhum.*

I have had charge of the district since October last, and I was previously Joint Magistrate from October 1902 to March 1903. I do not think that there is a large supply of labour available for Assam from this district. Coal mines and the new Ranchi Railway cannot get all the labour they want locally. The coal mines will take as many labourers as they can get; in Purulia coolies earn 3 annas a day but in the coal district you cannot get a coolie of any sort under 4 annas a day. There is much fertile waste land in the district which is not reclaimed for want of population to reclaim it. I think that Act VI of 1901 has been successful in suppressing abuses. The idea of going to Assam is not popular but the people now know too much about the place to be afraid of it. I do not consider that the present wages in Assam are sufficient to attract people from here, but I doubt whether a substantial rise in those wages would attract more people. I do not know why the numbers of registered emigrants from Purulia has been rising for the last four years. I do not remember any case of a contractor getting hold of sardari coolies. I have heard of unlicensed contractors doing so and recruiting in this district although it has been notified under Section 3. It is very easy to smuggle coolies across the border. There are numbers of unlicensed men working under the licensed recruiters. I would stop free recruiting in the districts adjoining Manbhum. The railway people are in league with the free contractors and put impediments in the way of the movement of sardari coolies. If labour in Cachar is free and the Act maintained in Assam, I think that the price of labour for Assam would become prohibitive. I also think that abuses would arise owing to men recruiting for Assam under pretence of being Cachar recruiters. The only men whom the contractors get now are bankrupts who have lost their lands. The unlicensed recruiters are mostly up-country men. We do not now license such men. I think that if the Act were entirely repealed you would have a revival of the old recruiting abuses, as all the old men are still in the business. If the sardar confines himself to recruiting his own friends and relatives I believe that it would give a quite inadequate supply of labour; the sardari system must be supplemented by the contractor. The sardari system worked legitimately is the cleaner system of the two, but I consider that the sardar is sometimes as big a blackguard as the arkati.

There is plenty of labour and plenty of land for the people here and I do not see what greater inducements than these can be offered by Assam.

No. 33.—MR. C. H. MASEYK, *Licensed Contractor, Purulia.*

I have lived here for 17 years. I am a licensed contractor. I have 11 licensed recruiters under me. I only started last April. I have been sending away on an average 8 coolies a month. I have to meet severe competition from the unlicensed contractors in Asansole and Raniganj; coolies are smuggled out of the district nearly every day. My recruiters tell me that if the licensed system were done away with they could give me twice or three times the number of coolies. There is delay in the depot, and though the coolie may be willing his relations turn up and induce him to alter his mind. The present licensed system is much safer for the contractor; if you returned to free recruiting you would have the old abuses. If the Act were abolished there would still be a scarcity of labour and therefore competition for the coolie: the coolie would fetch a price and therefore all the old malpractices would revive. I consider Manbhum is to a great extent played out as a recruiting district. There is nothing like the supply there was 10 or 15 years ago. The men who emigrate are those who are in difficulties and want to escape their creditors. I think that the contract should not be for more than two years; the four years' contract deters people. I do not consider that a rise in wages would attract more labour. Men do not go for the wages but to get away from their creditors. Assam will get very little labour if the Act is abolished in the Surma Valley; it is very much easier to get free than licensed labour. The licensed contractor's business would also suffer as free contractors would recruit nominally for Cachar but really for Assam; you would have a repetition on a larger scale of what now goes on at Asansole and Raniganj.

When I came here in 1889 a man earned 2 annas a day and a woman 5 pice; now wages are 10 pice for a man and 6 pice for a woman, and during harvest 3 annas and 2 annas. I would have all contractors licensed, but the coolie put on contract at the time that he is registered; the present delay is bad. The Kolhan and prohibited areas should also be opened to contractors: the closing of the Kolhan has killed the contractor's business in Singhbhum. Recruiters are very averse to bringing in single women because when a male guardian has been found, I often have to pay him half the commission, which would have gone to the recruiter, to get his consent to the emigration of the woman. I would not send for the relations of any woman provided that she herself is willing to go; I would let her go without further enquiry. This would lead to more women going to Assam than go under the present Act. My recruiters tell me that it would be a great inducement if coolies were offered land on the expiry of their contracts. It would also be well if coolies were allowed to return more freely to their own country; at present very few of them come back.

Purulia.

No. 34.—Mr. G. S. W. Bradish, *Dibrugarh.*

I am at present at Purulia on behalf of my firm, Messrs. Balmer, Lawrie & Co., looking after their sardars. The sardars work under the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. I am employed to assist and advise our sardars in all the recruiting districts, and to look after advances. Before the sardars are sent down from the gardens, I visit each estate and assist in their selection. I then come down for the season and look after their working making Purulia my headquarters. This is the third year I have been thus employed. Our sardars are working all over the recruiting districts of Bengal and the Central Provinces.

I consider that our recruiting has improved much since I first came down. I have over 600 sardars under me. Last year each sardar got 1·58 and this year I expect to get 2 adults a head. Hazaribagh and the Santal Pergannas are doing well. Section 90 I am finding particularly useful where it applies, and most of my sardars are working under it. I find a great difficulty in working Section 90 on account of the provision in sub-section (*g*). The labourers recruited now must go up to Assam either with the sardar himself or with a Section 90 sardar holding a permit from the same employer. The result is that when a sardar brings in a batch of coolies and wishes to return for more, he cannot make over his batch to another man to take to Assam, as it is very seldom that a sardar can be found ready to start, who has the qualifications required by the Act. Another drawback to Section 90 is the delay of 72 hours in the depot; this is objected to by the coolies, who do not like stopping in the depot. I would recommend that coolies recruited under Section 90 should be allowed to go up with a peon in the usual way and that the period of detention be reduced to 24 hours. I cannot let the coolies remain outside the depot, as they would be snapped up by the arkatis before one knew. A great point in favour of Section 90 is that no registration is required. The emigrant objects going to the magistrate's court for registration, and so does the sardar. The latter is liable to have his coolies bribed away by arkatis on the way to and from the court, or whilst waiting about there. In connection with Section 90 sardars I wish to say that in Manbhum I have received an order from the Superintendent of Emigration that all sardars should be sent up to have their permits countersigned before starting work (Superintendent's letter, No. Em.—104, dated 22nd November 1905). This the sardars do not like, and it is not required by the Act. I consider that Section 90, if worked without the restrictions I have mentioned, would give sufficient labour not only for the gardens I am connected with, but also for the Assam Valley generally.

I think there is still plenty of labour available for Assam in the recruiting districts. The people who want to emigrate want to go for good. It is quite the exception to find a man who wants to go up temporarily, and when emigrants return they generally ask to be sent back again. I do not think there is anything in the suggestion that people should be allowed to return to their country more frequently. We always let any man who wishes to visit his country come back as a sardar, and I find such people always perfectly ready to return to Assam. I have hardly ever had trouble with absconding sardars. We encourage people who have gone to the gardens to write to their friends and relations down here. If they would write, I am sure it would help our recruiting greatly.

In my opinion the contract has had much to do with deterring people from going to Assam. The labourer does not like being bound down. Some of our managers still want the contract, and it is entered into, but I think it is more a matter of form than anything else. I would myself do away with the contract altogether, as I do not think it is required. After labourers have been on a garden for a year or a year and a half, they will come and ask for a contract themselves, in order to get a bonus. But to start with I would have no contract at all, it would give the labourer confidence, which is the great thing to be desired. It would also give us more emigrants and that would bring down the expenses of importation. My opinion is that if the coolies are properly treated on the garden, they will stay there without any penal contract. I would also treat the labourers liberally in the way of granting them leave; I would not force a man to work when he is unwilling and does not want to. To work this system would require three adults per acre, but I think they could be got if such a free system existed and were fully known and appreciated.

I do not consider that the right of private arrest has had anything to do with deterring people from going to Assam. This provision of the law is quite unknown down here. Holding the views I do, I do not think that private arrest is necessary. Unpopular gardens may still want to keep it, but I would not make any exception on their account.

I would be in favour of withdrawing the Act altogether, if it would not lead to a recrudescence of recruiting abuses by arkatis. But so far as I can see, there would be such abuses. Labour at any rate to begin with would be scarce, and would command a price, but in the course of perhaps five years things might right themselves. Even without any contract I think the arkati would still get paid for coolies landed on a garden, and so long as he gets paid he will work. I therefore do not consider that the Act can be altogether done away with in the recruiting districts. So far as my firm is concerned, we want to see the arkati disappear altogether, and as I have already said, with a system of free sardari recruiting, I think that sufficient labour would be got.

Two years ago we started a colonization scheme. When a sardar brings up five or six men, we start a small colony and give them land free for three or four years, and after that at half Government rates. We are buying up land for the purpose. The emigrants clear their land and build their own houses, and get paid their wages for doing it. The sardar is

responsible that they do this. He also draws commission if the labourers work 15 days in the month. The labourers can work when they like, there is no master and no chowkidar. So far this system has worked satisfactorily. We put the labourers under no contract: if there is a contract we tear it up in front of the coolie. We have now five gardens under this scheme, and we have had no deserters. The sardar explains this to the people he gets in the recruting districts. One sardar took up 9 coolies last year from this district, and another 31 from Hazaribagh. This year a sardar got 15 in the Santal Pergannas on these conditions and has told the garden manager that he will get 40 next year. Nearly all gardens have got land available for such a scheme, and Government should assist any that have not. **Purulia.**

In my opinion what is wanted for Assam is a bridge over the Brahmaputra at Gauhati. The coolie dislikes the steamer journey: once make it easy for him to go by train the whole way, and he will go to Assam. He will soon find that it is a country where the crops do not fail and will colonize it.

When Cachar and Sylhet are free and Assam is still under the Act, it will hurt Assam. The Assam Valley sardar will be hampered by the Act restrictions, while the Surma Valley sardar will not, and the latter will score. I do not think the arkati will be wanted for the Surma Valley, which will get all the labour it wants through sardars and will not therefore pay the arkati his price.

The labourers we get from Ghazipur and Luckeserai will only do for certain gardens, they will not do for jungly gardens. But all old gardens could easily take United Provinces labour, and I think that managers of such gardens should be got to try it. The labourers do not give any trouble. There was a trial made of giving these labourers flour, but it was given up and the people took to rice all right.

I do not think there is anything in the theory that you must have arkatis in order to tap new ground. There are people from all over the recruiting districts in Assam, who can be used to get fresh labour.

No. 35.—Mr. E. B. Clair Smith, *General Manager of Wards and Encumbered Estates, Manbhum.*

I have been four years in Manbhum. I think that there is labour available in this district for Assam. The competition of the coal fields and new railways prevents more people going to that province. Emigration there also has got a bad name, owing to single members of families being taken away by arkatis and lost sight of. In the case of sardars there is not the same objection, as people go with them openly and by twos and threes. I think that arkati recruiting ought to be prohibited; if that were done the sardars would get more recruits. I know cases of coolies who were recruited by sardars remitting money home to prevent the family holding being sold up. When they go with sardars they do so with the intention of earning money in order to retain the family holding. I served for 10 years as a planter in the Golaghat Sub-Division of the Sibsagar district, so I know that coolies can earn more than the minimum wage. In comparing the rate of wages in this district with that in Assam it must be borne in mind that the labourer in his own district has an interest in the family holding. I consider that the offer of a higher wage would tempt more people to go with sardars, but I do not think it would have any effect in the case of arkati recruiting as the latter class at present always stuff people with all kinds of promises. Speaking as an old planter, I think that the terms of the contract might be made more attractive without much extra cost to the garden. Some coolies emigrate to save the family holding from sale and such persons would be attracted by a shorter term of contract, say for two years. I am of opinion that the offer of land with a revenue-free term would attract emigrants. When I was in Assam, I settled coolies on all my available *dhan* land with the result that they anchored there for good. They worked readily and were the best coolies I had.

There is a great deal of illegal recruiting in this district. Many people are smuggled out to Asansole, Raniganj, etc. Personally, I like sardari recruitment as it enables my ryots to pay their rents, but the ordinary zemindar objects to it as taking away his ryots. I, however, strongly object to the smuggling away of coolies, in which case the coolie gets nothing himself but changes hands half-a-dozen times, and all the money goes to the recruiter.

No. 36.—Mr. A. E. Saubolle, *Licensed Contractor, Purulia.*

I am a licensed contractor. I have been about 25 years in Manbhum during the whole of which time I have been engaged in recruiting. Before that I was two years in Ranchi. I should say that the number of emigrants has been gradually declining during the last 25 years and sank at the end of that period to one quarter of what it was at the beginning. Before the Bengal-Nagpur Railway was opened coolies walked to Raniganj. Recruiting will never be what it was 25 years ago. The surplus population has all gone. The Bengal-Nagpur Railway opened up the Central Provinces to recruiting on a large scale for the first time and also improved recruiting in Manbhum and Ranchi. When a new district is opened, for a few years you get a large supply of labour which afterwards is bound to fall off.

More labour could be obtained if the contractor's work were made easier. I object to Section 20 of the Act; the contractor should not be civilly responsible for the work of his

Purulia. agent. A contractor cannot now employ more agents than he can actively supervise and he does not venture to make large advances for fear that his license may be suddenly cancelled for the misbehaviour of some subordinate. The present law merely offers an inducement to the contractor to shield a recruiter who has been doing wrong.

It now takes two months before the license of a recruiter is issued. The enquiries about the recruiter are in the hands of the police. Applications for licenses are often refused; even if a man has been convicted over a land dispute it is sufficient to debar him. The police enquiries tend to make respectable men afraid to take out licenses.

I object to the three days' detention after registration provided by Section 44, which often comes up to 15 days when enquiries have to be made in the case of single women. The production of the lawful guardians of such women often takes some days. The three days' detention of single men and families is not only objectionable but expensive.

Another difficulty is that while the registered coolie is undergoing the three days' detention, one of his relatives often puts in a petition to the magistrate and objects to his going to Assam. The coolie is sent for and told by the magistrate to go where he likes. It is not worth while to take action under Section 168 and I have never done so. I think that such a coolie should not be brought from the depot when once it is found that he is registered; he will have in any case to come to court to execute his contract.

The license fee of recruiters is R10 which is too high; the contractor has to pay this. I have no doubt that in the interior there are sub-recruiters who cannot afford to take out a license at this fee and who would take out a license for a small fee. When working as a free contractor I had 1,000 recruiters in Manbhum. I have 60 or 80 licensed recruiters now. I spend R1,000 a year on recruiters' licenses and one year I spent R3,000, when I was working in Chaibassa as well. If the area now closed to contractors were thrown open we should get a larger supply of labour.

We cannot register at Purulia coolies who come from the Native States: they presumably go on to Asansole and Raniganj. The enquiries about coolies whose residence is in the districts adjoining Manbhum and who may actually live close to the border add to our difficulties.

To make labour in Assam more popular I would shorten the term of contract to one or two years. It would be better still if coolies went up entirely free and took a local contract if they liked on the garden. People do not like to bind themselves to serve in a place they know nothing about; all the formality which is a necessary part of the execution of the contract also frightens intending labourers.

If the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley and retained in the Assam Valley, the supply of labour to the latter will suffer. It will also lead to recruiters taking emigrants for Cachar and sending them to Assam.

If the Act is abolished altogether the abuses would be awful. The arkati would be a necessity and the arkati would have to be paid. It would also lead to men taking advances for Assam and then bolting. Such professional bolters exist under the present system. If coolies went to Assam for as short a time as they go to the Duars, the expense of the journey to and fro would be excessive. I send away about 20 coolies a month from Purulia and under present circumstances I do not expect to increase that number, unless the free contractors at Asansole are stopped in their illegal recruiting. I should like this done.

The fact that peons have to go to Assam with the coolies adds unnecessarily to the cost of labour. I would not send the peon further than to the steamer and let the coolies be met by a garden chowkidar at the landing place. I have to keep up 7 places of accommodation in this district which is an unnecessary expense; in some of them only one coolie is quartered in a month, but I have to keep them up with an establishment all the same.

28TH FEBRUARY 1906.

No. 37.—RAI NANDA GOPAL BANNERJEA BAHADUR, *District Engineer, Manbhum.*

I have been District Engineer here for 27 years. I believe that abuses still exist in connection with coolie recruiting, but the extent of recruiting has much diminished under the present Act. I do not know the difference between sardari and contractor's recruiting. I do not think that there is a large supply of labour available in this district. The available supply has diminished owing to the development of the coal fields and the general opening of the district by railways and local works. Bhumij, Bauris, Ghasis and some Santals work in the coal mines but not Mahtos, who are cultivators. In the coal districts an unskilled coolie earns 4 to 5 annas against 6 to 8 pice in the old days. In the larger trade centres the ordinary rate is now 3 annas a day. I believe that if the Act were abolished, the planter would have to offer higher wages and abuses would die out. People are afraid to complain of malpractices now because there is an impression that the contract is a *quasi-sarkari* business. If recruiting were free they would readily complain. I think that the four years' contract deters people from going to Assam.

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No. 38.—Babu Sarat Chandra Sen, *Pleader, Purulia.*

I have been over 12 years in Purulia. For the last three years so many people have not been emigrating to Assam from Purulia centre as formerly, but people of this district are sent to Assam from Midnapur and Asansole. The falling off in the number recruited at Purulia is due to the passing of Act VI of 1901, to the decrease of the population, to the increase of the cultivated area and to the demand for labour in the collieries. Act VI has checked abuses to a certain extent and at the same time has had a deterrent effect on labour going forward owing to the strictness of the rules. Abuses still occur as coolies are smuggled out of this district to non-notified districts and as some sardars sell coolies recruited by them to contractors. If contractors, both licensed and free, were abolished altogether and sardars confined to recruiting their own relations or friends, in my opinion the abuses would stop. I would still keep the Act, amending the definition of sardar so as to confine his recruiting operations to his own relations or friends. I think that the supply of labour would be increased if the contractors' system were abolished. If this system continues much longer the price of coolies will rise much higher. I would advocate its abolition and the payment of a bonus to the coolie which could easily be met out of the high price now paid to the contractors.

In order to popularise emigration to Assam and to compete with the collieries I would recommend the payment of the bonus already mentioned to the coolie, and an increase in his emoluments in the shape either of cash or food. My belief is that emigrants do not understand the details of the contract; they only know that they have got to work somewhere and at so much pay. People believe that emigration to Assam means going to a penal settlement. The abuses in connection with recruitment may have contributed to this impression. Another thing is that so few return. The sardari system is popular because families are kept together, whereas under the contractor's system they are often separated. I do not think that the offer of land would be an inducement to people to emigrate as there is plenty of land here.

I would retain registration before a magistrate even in the case of sardari coolies. There should be careful and thorough enquiries and there should be a special officer for this purpose. The enquiries should not be perfunctory as there is reason to believe they are sometimes at present. I do not think that enquiry before a magistrate deters emigrants, indeed it rather tends to give them confidence.

If the Act were repealed and recruitment free there would be fraud and abuses. If the penal contract were abolished that would not of itself induce people to go to Assam. No one at present goes to Assam with his eyes open; people induce the labourer to go for their own profit. I consider that Sections 195 and 196 should be repealed altogether, as they confer power which should not be possessed by one subject over another.

No. 39.—Babu Rakhal Dass Sarkar, *late General Manager of the Wards and Encumbered Estates, Manbhum.*

I have lived in this district for 40 years. I believe that there are fewer complaints connected with recruiting under the present Act than formerly. I think that the supply of labour could be increased if the emigrants were not put on contract for a definite term, and if after arrival in Assam they were free to select the garden on which they would work; they do not like to bind themselves definitely to a garden they have never seen. The present rate of wages is also insufficient; an unskilled labourer here gets 3 annas a day. Rupees 7 per month should be offered in Assam. Coolies would stay two or three years without a contract and after coming home would often return to Assam. More pains should be taken to explain through a reliable agency the nature of the work and its remuneration in Assam; arkatis and sardars generally misrepresent these matters. Sardars are more satisfactory than recruiters; but I believe that garden-sardars also misrepresent matters; if not why should a man go to Assam for ₹5 when he can get ₹6 per mensem at home. I have heard that coolies in Assam can earn more than the nominal monthly wage. I think that if the Act were abolished there would be many malpractices in connection with the recruitment of labour. The grant of land after the expiry of their contract would attract emigrants; as population increases there would be more pressure on the land here. If the prospects were sufficiently attractive and sufficiently widely known it would be unnecessary to spend the large sums now paid to recruiters for inducing people to emigrate. The withdrawal of the Act from Cachar will injure recruiting for Assam. People would be suspicious of the places in which the Act is in force The withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 is desirable. There are plenty of people in this district who could be recruited for Assam. There is only a limited amount of land in this district available for cultivation.

CHAIBASSA, 1st March 1906.

Chaibassa.

No. 40.—Mr. Pickford, *Local Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Chaibassa.*

I have been connected with recruitment for Assam since 1899 at Dumka, Jubbulpore and Chaibassa. I have been here for 2½ years. I have the districts of Sambalpur, Singhbhum, Manbhum and Midnapur under me.

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So far but little use has been made of Section 90, and my experience is that the system has not given much better results than ordinary sardari recruiting. Once it is better understood, I should look for increased emigration under it. I sometimes receive sardars from the gardens who have been too long in Assam and have lost touch with their country. I have known cases of sardars who have not been paid the bonus they were promised for recruiting labourers. I have seen men with this grievance sent back again to the recruiting districts. Men who have been treated in this way will naturally not exert themselves to get emigrants. I believe such cases to be fairly numerous; the bonus is not paid I presume in order to keep down expenses. I do not know of any present scheme for offering land to intending emigrants. I have no suggestion to make on the subject; I do not think that the ordinary emigrant in the recruiting districts would understand much about such an offer.

About 10 per cent. of the sardars annually disappear in the recruiting districts. I used to take out warrants against them but they are very seldom caught, and I have almost given up taking any action in the matter.

I make payments of debts of intending emigrants frequently. Rupees 20 is not an uncommon sum to pay on this account. I could not say whether this is treated as an advance against the labourer on the garden. The sardar has always an advance, from which he makes expenditure on feeding and treating people. If the sardar has no money, people would remark about his having gained nothing by going to Assam. He is therefore supplied with funds which he must use if he is to be successful. I cannot say how sardars' advances are treated on the gardens, whether they are written off as cost of recruiting or shown against the persons recruited. The sardar has also to pay the relations of any person he takes away in order to obtain their consent. Sardars stay in the recruiting district for 3 or 4 months on the average. Some 20 per cent. never get any coolies, I should say; that includes absconders.

A common reason for emigration is that one member of a family goes up to Assam to earn money to help to pay off the family debts. If the period of contract were made shorter this might conduce to more people going for this purpose, once the idea was thoroughly understood. That is why people go so readily to the Duars instead of to Assam. I do not think that there is much prospect of emigration from this district increasing to any great extent. It is only the people who are hard up who go. If you mention "Assam" to a villager it conveys the idea of hardship: the "Duars" have no such name, people can go there and come back as they like. In the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association's depots uncooked food has always been supplied to the emigrants. This district supplies mainly Hos and Mundas.

I have recorded a note on the subjects of the Committee's enquiry, which I wish to put in.

Note recorded by Mr. Pickford.

In my opinion the causes of the difficulty experienced in getting labour for Assam are—

(1) the distance,
(2) the local demand for labour at equal or nearly equal wages; railways, coal mines, etc., absorb a large amount of labour,
(3) local opposition.

Hundreds more would emigrate every year but for the opposition shewn by local landlords and village headmen. These men get their work done for little or nothing by the villagers and they resent, often forcibly, the emigration of the latter. Another local class who discourage emigration are the money-lenders who get the people into their grip and keep them there. Another factor is the supposed dislike of Government to coolies emigrating and I am bound to say that occasionally the action of officials is such as to lead the headmen and others to believe that Government does discountenance emigration.

These are the principal causes of the difficulty in getting a full labour supply for Assam. That the emigrants do not dislike Assam when they get there, is shewn by the fact that 90 per cent. of the coolies sent down as sardars return voluntarily to their gardens on expiry of their licenses, when they might easily run away to Native States or hide in other parts of their districts. Those that do not return are generally kept back by pressure from their relations or village headmen or have a bad record on the garden. To these might be added some who do not return because they have been unsuccessful in recruiting.

Doubtless coolies would like to return to their country after a shorter period than four years and very many do return as sardars. After 7 or 8 years on the gardens they become wedded to Assam. In my opinion the right of private arrest does not restrict emigration in the least because absconders know they are in the wrong, and to a coolie it is quite natural that his employer should employ any means to make him return to duty.

If the Act were withdrawn from the whole province and a system of free labour were established in Assam, I have no hesitation in saying that there would be a recrudescence of abuses, especially as regards recruitment of women. Later on in these notes I shall deal with this when speaking about contractors. But, in the meantime, I wish to state that these abuses are now in full swing in connection with recruiting for the Duars, and it has always been a wonder to me that Government should strain so at the Assam gnat and swallow so easily the Duars camel. To the forlorn husband or father it can make no possible difference whether wife or daughter has gone to Assam or to the Duars. I must not be understood from this to be against free recruiting. But some check is necessary, and it seems to me that it would be sufficient if (*a*) every man and woman proceeding to the tea districts understood clearly where they were going, and (*b*) if a register were kept somewhere so that they could be traced if necessary. For the purposes of (*a*) an Emigration Officer might interview coolies at some convenient place *en route* and merely ask them if they knew where they were going and whether they were willing to proceed. For (*b*) a list might be sent to the District Officer as at present under Section 90, or merely kept in the office of the local agent who would send copies from time to time to the authorities.

If the Act were repealed and recruiting were free, more labourers would be forthcoming from the recruiting districts for the following reasons. The recruiters would not be marked men as they are at present, subject to blackmail from the time they leave their gardens till they return, at the hands of the police, railway petty officials, court chuprassies and Babus, and finally the headmen of the villages. I say this because sardars working under Section 92 have a better average than sardars under Chapter IV or even Section 90. Village people hate and fear anything in the shape of a Court and they therefore hate registration. When sent up for registration they are questioned and pulled about by office peons to discover identification marks in a manner that must be very trying to their nerves. I wish specially to bring to the notice of the Committee the fact

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that, whenever the regular registering officer is absent and the coolies have to be sent to any native Deputy Magistrate for registration, there is trouble. Among other instances of this I give the following :—

On 20th February 1905 nine coolies were sent before a Deputy Magistrate. Of these five were refused registration because —

(1) the registering officer considered a coolie wrongly aged by the doctor ;
(2) the registering officer did not believe the sardar could have so old a wife ;
(3) the registering officer would not believe a coolie had originally come from the Ranchi district ;
(4) the coolie's brother was said to have gone to Assam 3 or 4 years before and the registering officer insisted that the register should be searched to confirm it ;
(5) there was some discrepancy in the statement as to the date of death of the coolie's husband.

Owing to this one coolie became unwilling and was lost to the garden.

Frequently again sardars are harassed by detention for several days while their licenses are being countersigned. Only a few days ago I found out that the detention was due to the fact that they would not pay 4 annas each to the Babu and peon whose business it was to put the licenses up. I am glad to say this was brought home to the offenders and both were punished. I do not understand why, if the officer in the labour district considers a man fit to be a sardar, another signature to his license should be necessary here.

On 2nd December 1903 the Deputy Commissioner of Chaibassa refused to countersign licenses unless granted for "Singhbhum" and not "Chaibassa," and when "Chaibassa" was altered to "Singhbhum" he was not satisfied. As if, for ordinary purposes, the words were not synonymous.

I conclude from all the above that, if the Act is to remain in force in the recruiting districts, it should not be open to each succeeding district officer to put his own interpretation on the various sections, and in especial registering officers should be clearly instructed that they are not to take upon themselves more than the Act confers. Coolies should be put down as what they say they are, unless there is positive evidence to the contrary, and should not be worried with questions on irrelevant matters until they contradict themselves. Here I would draw attention to the Government Resolution (Bengal) of 3rd May 1901, paragraph 6, which exempts sardars from producing positive evidence about single women. In practice this positive evidence is required as in the case of contractors.

Sir Bampfylde Fuller apparently thinks that many coolies are deterred from emigrating because they have to go to a depot. This may be true of a contractor's depot but I feel sure they do not mind being in a place of accommodation as long as they are not detained there too long. I am quite certain the ordeal of the registration court is a much greater deterrent than the "place of accommodation."

I have already said that I do not think Sections 195 and 196 make any difference in the popularity or unpopularity of Assam. I think it might make for popularity if labourers desiring it were repatriated on the expiry of their contracts. I do not know what increase of pay would do ; very little, I expect, unless the increase were so large as to be quite impracticable. The placing of facts concerning Assam conditions of labour and wages before any but those likely to emigrate could not do any good.

The extension of Section 90 of the Act would undoubtedly be useful as a step towards free recruitment of labour, but it will not reduce the cost of recruiting much if at all. At present this section is applied to some districts and withheld from others for no apparent good reason. To make it more effective any labourer should be competent to have a permit irrespective of the length of time he has been on the garden. I am entirely against the employment of arkatis as sardars but many young male coolies would like, after seeing the garden, to come down again almost immediately and take up their wives and families. They are afraid to do so until they have spied out the land, and if famine or scarcity prevails in the districts whence they come it is obvious that a delay of 6 months may make a considerable difference in their chances of finding their families alive or in the same places. Again their coolies should be sent up, if desired, in the ordinary way through forwarding agents while the sardar recruits others. It is quite unnecessary for the sardar to accompany them himself. Why should a coolie recruited under Section 90 need a different escort to one recruited under Chapter IV or Section 92 ? Nothing is more curious in Act VI than the way it ignores forwarding agents and, as much as possible, local agents. Yet 99 per cent. of all sardari coolies going to Assam pass through the hands of both. If any one supposes that sardars can come down, recruit coolies, pay their debts, conciliate relatives, fill up the voluminous forms necessary, get the coolies registered and put under contract and transport them to Assam without assistance from an agent in the recruiting districts, I venture to say he is very much mistaken. If the Act is to continue in force I would suggest that sardars should everywhere be allowed to recruit under Sections 90 or 92, the coolies being put under contract in Assam, *i. e.*, after they have seen a tea garden and its conditions. The recruiting should be carried on under the checks I have already suggested and under the control of a reliable local agent.

I am not in a position to say whether Assam can do entirely without contractors or some substitute for them, but I do say most emphatically that if contractors were done away with, sardars would get more recruits. Nearly all the evils of coolie-recruiting occur under the contractor's system. To that system is due the high price of coolies, not only of coolies supplied by contractors but of sardari coolies. It is a mistake to suppose that Act VI has done away with the evils of the system. The taking of coolies from one district to another and registering them there goes on freely, and is, of course, much facilitated by the existence of districts where Chapter III is not in force. Recruiting for contractors is forbidden in the Kolhan tract of Singhbhum, yet I get yearly numbers of sardars to recruit in the Kolhan, who have gone up as arkati coolies from Purulia, Raniganj or Khargpur. Owing to the high price he receives, the contractor is able to spend unlimited money in evading the law. He purchases a large number of coolies from sardars, especially sardars who live within easy reach of the railway. Sardars have confessed to me having sold their coolies to contractors' arkatis. The evil does not end with the licensed arkatis, for there are numbers of unlicensed ones, and amongst the latter are many of the native railway officials at the stations in the recruiting districts.

I give the following as one of several instances which have come to my knowledge. A few days ago Jaganath, sardar of Singlo Tea Estate, came into Purulia and said that he took two coolies to Nimdih station on the way in. There a station official demanded R25 from the sardar, and told him to go to Purulia and get it. On the sardar's reporting the matter to the sub-agent, the latter sent out a man with the sardar to Nimdih station to get the coolies but there was no trace of them at Nimdih. The sardar went back to his village to find them, but in the meantime they were brought to a contractor's depot. From there they made their escape and came over to our depot. At the time of writing this, the sub-agent has not found the sardar, but I have ordered him to report the matter to the Deputy Commissioner.

At Jharsuguda, the junction for Sambalpur, I am obliged to keep a peon for no other purpose than to keep sardars and coolies from the attentions of the arkatis. There are some of these at nearly every station on the line.

If a contractor's depot is closed for some malpractice, he at once opens another in somebody else's name. Too often, in my opinion, the contractor is himself allowed to reopen. The arkatis, especially the unlicensed ones, are the scum of the earth and their doings, more than anything else, have made the name of Assam to stink in the nostrils of the people. If it be contended that new gardens cannot do without the contractor, I reply, why not give back to the local agent the power to recruit direct which he had under Section 62 of Act I of 1882. I understand that the reason that power was taken away was because unscrupulous local agents were supposed to work in league with contractors, taking their rejections for the sardars and

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making over good sardari coolies to the contractors for the extra profit. This could be got over if greater care were exercised in only granting local agents' licenses to men of good character.

The withdrawal of Act VI from the Surma Valley districts will prejudicially affect recruiting for Upper Assam. If the Act is to be kept for Upper Assam and abolished for the Surma Valley, the recruiters for Upper Assam should be placed on the same footing as the recruiters for the Surma Valley in the recruiting districts. As suggested above, the coolies could be placed on contract in Upper Assam, as is now the case with coolies recruited under Section 92.

The existence of free emigration to the Surma Valley districts, side by side with recruitment under the Act for Upper Assam, will lead to difficulty in the recruiting districts and abuses will certainly arise. Sardars from Assam would tell coolies they were taking them to the Surma Valley; it would create a most undesirable state of affairs in the recruiting districts.

I omitted to state above that, if contractors are to be retained, they should, in my opinion, be all put under Chapter III. This is urgently required in Midnapur, where scores of sardari coolies are being taken at the present time.

No. 41.—Rev. A. Logsdail, *S. P. G. Mission, Chaibassa.*

I have been for about 15 years in the Singhbhum district, and I also know the Ranchi district and something of the Manbhum and Hazaribagh districts. I have toured a good deal in the interior of this and the Ranchi districts. In my opinion one of the chief reasons which have deterred people from emigrating to Assam is the bad name which it has got owing to the past very high death-rate among emigrants and the unhealthiness of its climate. From statistics I observe that the death-rate in the sixties was exceedingly heavy, and I have heard villagers remark that if the death-rate among the people who had gone to Assam from this district had been what it is here, Assam would have been full of people by now. Allied to that cause is the insignificant number of labourers who return to their homes. The fact of people of low status and bad character being engaged in the recruitment of labourers for Assam has also tended towards the unpopularity of that province, as persons of this class adopt objectionable and immoral methods. The persons employed to recruit by contractors, both licensed and free, are more particularly people of this class, and the men sent down as garden sardars are to a considerable extent of the same stamp. The means employed by such persons have a strongly deterrent effect on the emigration of respectable people to Assam. I think also that the four years' contract and the pressure brought upon coolies, whose agreements are on the point of expiring, to renew their contracts for a further period restrict emigration, but I only know of these matters from what returned sardars and coolies tell me and not from personal observation. I have not heard mention made of the right of private arrest conferred on employers, and emigrants are not told of this, as I think they ought to be. The fact that the registering clerk receives 2 annas per person registered is a temptation to him not to explain the full facts to intending emigrants. In fact they cannot be fully explained to such people under existing circumstances, as the registering officer is generally ignorant of the aboriginal languages. Persons who go to Assam do not return well-to-do, and the percentage of those who return at all is not above 1 or 2 in this district. It seems to me impossible for a large number of those who go up to Assam under the Act to save sufficient to come back in any way well-to-do at the end of their period of contract. Though some coolies earn from ₹10 to ₹15 a month, the returns show the average pay earned to be less than the statutory wage, and the inference from this is that many earn considerably less than the statutory wage and are therefore unable to return to their country if they wish to do so. People here tell me that Assam rice cooked over night cannot be taken at the morning meal next day as is done here. They say that the water is saltish; and that they have often to drink it lukewarm, which they think tends to give them bowel complaints. They also complain of *dukh* both from their employers and from the circumstances of the country, but I cannot specify what particular troubles they refer to; they sometimes, however, complain of leeches.

If Act VI is repealed, my opinion is that there will be abuses again, even if the penal contract is abolished. There are abuses in connection with Duars recruitment, but nothing like what they have been in connection with Assam. A man can get back from the Duars in 20 days by road. He could not get back from Assam probably within two months. Once the coolie gets there, he is stranded and would be at the mercy of Assam. Practically he cannot get back and he would therefore have a considerable value which the planter would be willing to pay for in recruitment. The coolie would, I admit, be free to go to another garden, but the planters would, with free labour, naturally protect themselves against coolies going from garden to garden and also against loss of the cost of the coolie's importation. If advantage were taken of Act XIII of 1859 and Section 492 of the Indian Penal Code to put the labourer under contract that would still further enhance his price, and so far increase the risk of abuses in recruitment. In my opinion Government surveillance over recruitment is essential. I would further insist on registration in all cases; I am not in favour of the relaxation of the provisions of Chapter IV which is allowed by Section 90 of the present Act. I, in fact, should like to see Chapter V of the Act altogether withdrawn. Section 91 allows the Local Government to make exemptions in favour of associations: the associations may be all right, but the agency through which they have to work cannot be, there is always the weak link in the chain, *viz.*, the unscrupulous recruiter or sardar. I would abolish recruitment by contractors, licensed and unlicensed; the arkati system stands condemned, as having been at the root of a great deal of the abuses of the past. In my opinion the only form of recruitment that should be allowed is registered recruiting by sardars. The system must succeed or fail according to the care taken by the garden to send down straight men as sardars, who will work cleanly. I would also abolish the system of sardari advances except for necessary expenses

and the payment of existing debts due by intending emigrants. Give the sardar higher pay and no bonus for coolies; it is this paying for coolies that is mischievous. **Chalbassa.**

I should very much like to see an arrangement made by which a missionary could be allowed to make his own arrangements with a garden, as to sending up any Native Christian members of his flock, independent of the Act.

Even if a purified system of sardari recruitment is introduced, there will not be a flow of labour to Assam without greater inducement for people to go there. The inducement must be a sufficient wage to cover good food, good clothing against the wet climate and more frequent illnesses of Assam, with a margin to enable the labourer to live well and comfortably. I have considered the subject and have come to the conclusion that the pay of a man should be R8 and of a woman R6 with no deductions for illness, the result of work on the garden or of the climate of Assam. I would deduct R1 per month and place it in a provident fund to be paid to the labourer at the end of the contract period. This might enable the labourer, if he wished, to return to his country or to commence cultivation if he preferred to stay in Assam. I would also give the labourer arriving on the garden a bonus sufficient to maintain him so as to enable him to get his first month's pay without deductions. The pay should always be given in money, and the coolie should be allowed to buy his rice on the garden or in the bazaar, at the contract rate. I say in the bazaar, as the bazaar rate may sometimes be as cheap as that on the garden, and the coolie prefers to choose for himself. I would also have no delays in payment of wages. It would be advantageous to have payment made fortnightly or better still weekly. In that case the bonus would be reduced proportionately. The term of contract should be for one year but I would put no woman under contract. The reason for this is that pregnant women should not be compelled to work beyond the period which as expecting mothers they know to be requisite, and after child-birth until they are recovered. The industry would under the above system give the coolie the money that is now misspent on the arkati and all his doings.

I am in favour of the grant of land to time-expired labourers. This would be a great inducement to the aboriginal to go to Assam. He is very keen on cultivation and would go far to get it. The offer of land, independently of the tea industry, would also induce many people to go to Assam and would eventually create a local supply of labour there.

The more correct information that can be placed before persons who take an interest in Assam emigration, the better it would be. A leaflet or two with salient facts would be useful.

The reason for the high price of labour is the imperious demand by the tea industry for labour at any cost, and the fact that in the past this demand called forth a large number of people who could ask almost any price for the labourers they got, with the result that a great extent of the recruitment has been in the hands of these persons ever since. By doing away with all recruitment by contractors, the cost will at once fall and more money will be available for the labourer who does the work. I would only have properly supervised recruitment, with Chapter V concessions withdrawn. I consider that strictly supervised contractors' recruiting is better than laxly supervised recruitment by sardars. I do not think that the intending emigrant objects to appearing before the registering officer, except where there is some underhand reason for his not wishing to do so. In this district the fact of registration is a great point in favour of giving the people confidence in going to Assam. They trust the Deputy Commissioner and anything which he authorizes they accept.

I should wish to see the Act further amended in various respects. I shall submit a written opinion on this subject.

When the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley and free recruiters come with money in their hands to get labour for the Valley, there will be abuses in my opinion. I hold for strict registration under all circumstances; the people of the Chota Nagpur districts are easily misled and Government must watch over them. This is specially the case in this district, where the Kolhan is a Government estate with some 200,000 aborigines, whose interests Government must care for.

My opinion is that the further extension of tea cultivation should not be permitted until there is sufficient labour in Assam for the proper cultivation of the area at present under tea. Let cultivation be extended by all means, I should wish for nothing better, but Government should see that it is not done at the expense of the labourers' health, life or morals, and until conditions allow of this, a halt should be called.

Abstract of written Note submitted by Rev. A. Logsdail, dated 21st March 1906.

Mr. Logsdail has submitted a note showing in detail the amendments he would like to see made in the Act. The most important changes recommended are as follows:—

1. That the labourer should receive a copy of the contract in his own language; that the term of the contract should not exceed one year; and that no male under 19 years of age nor any female shou'd be placed on contract.
2. That the rate of wages should be R8.
3. That all recruiting by contractors should be abolished.
4. That a labourer should have served two years on the garden, before receiving a garden sardar's certificate to recruit labourers for Assam; and that no woman be licensed as a garden sardar.
5. That registering officers should refuse registration where the intending emigrant is leaving behind him any member of his family unable to provide for himself.

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6. That a period of four days should elapse between registration and placing on contract in the case of coolies recruited by garden sardars.
7. That medical examination of emigrants should be compulsory.
8. That the labourer should receive full pay, unless he absents himself from work owing to idleness, drunkenness or festivities; and always if he works six consecutive hours, irrespective of the completion of the task.
9. That the employer should pay the cost of repatriating labourers whose contract is cancelled under Section 140.
10. That the labourer be allowed to redeem his contract at any time by paying the expenses incurred on his journey to Assam, in giving him a bonus on arrival on the garden and in paying his debts, the amount payable for redemption being limited to a sum not exceeding R 25.
11. That Section 165 should apply to local agents and garden sardars.
12. That Sections 195 and 196 should be cancelled.

2ND MARCH 1906.

No. 42.—JOSEPH MANKI, *Katbari, Singhbhum.*

I am an Honorary Magistrate of Chaibassa. Few people go from my *ilaka* to Assam; they say that the country is a bad one, rainy and full of leeches. This I have heard from returned coolies. I have not talked to sardars. I hear that Jalpaiguri is a good place; many people have gone from my *ilaka* to Jalpaiguri. The people who have gone to Assam from my *ilaka* have not come back or very few of them. I cannot say if people would go if they were offered land after the termination of the agreement; they do not like to leave their relations. I have not heard of headmen preventing their ryots from going to Assam. There have been no recruiters committing malpractices in my *ilaka*.

No. 43.—DULU MANKI, *Dambasai, Singhbhum.*

No people go from my *ilaka* to Assam: a few went to Jalpaiguri five years ago and returned. My people can get as much work as they want in Chaibassa bazaar. People say that Assam is not a good place to go to because it is so far off. They have cultivation and do not care to leave the district in search of work.

No. 44.—SADHU MANKI, *Pokharia, Singhbhum.*

No one goes willingly from my *ilaka* to Assam, but people including married women are *phuslaoed* away. Some go willingly; but their relations do not like them to go to a far country where they may die without any one to look after them. Most people who want to go and earn money go to Jalpaiguri.

No. 45.—BABU RAKHAL CHANDRA CHATTERJI, *Government Pleader, Chaibassa.*

I have been in Chaibassa for the last 15 years. Emigration from this district to Assam ought to be discontinued. Many people go there but they are deceived. Garden sardars deceive them; females are taken on the pretence of being kept as mistresses by the sardars. I speak particularly of emigrants from Native States. I think that there have been fewer abuses since the passing of Act VI of 1901. People do not go willingly because they have to sign agreements for four years and therefore prefer to emigrate to Jalpaiguri. I would have no objection to emigration to Assam if the Duars system of recruitment were adopted. I consider that system would be more popular among the people, and it is possible that a larger number would go to Assam. Men earn from 2 to 3 annas per diem here and women from 5 to 8 pice, so I am of opinion that Assam should offer 8 annas per diem. Why should people leave their native place for less? I advocate no contracts and the Duars system. I have not heard any complaints regarding emigration to the Duars. There is plenty of uncultivated land in this district, so the offer of land in Assam would not attract emigrants.

At present registration is some check and if that were removed under a free labour system a man taken to Assam by malpractices would be obliged to remain there, and this would result in abuses here in connection with recruitment. I do not think that the people of this district are fit to look after themselves. I therefore consider that there should still be an Act for the control of recruitment. I would still have registration but without contracts in Assam.

No. 46.—DR. MUNGAVIN, I.S.M.D., *Civil Surgeon, Chaibassa.*

I have been here for about 4 years. I have been Registering Officer all the time. There are no contractors working here now. There were contractors when I first came, but they did so badly that they gave up working. I consider that there is scope for emigration in this district, there are plenty of people who could go to Assam. 360 labourers were registered in 1903-04 and 455 last year. If more do not go, it is because they do not know the advantages of Assam, *viz.*, free housing and medical treatment. I do not know that Assam is unpopular with the people of the district. I am of opinion that a shorter term of contract would make Assam more popular. I would make the maximum three years. If people were allowed

to come back to see their relatives after completing their term, that would also be popular. People very seldom come back except as sardars. I have never met any one who has come back except as a sardar. **Chaibassa.**

I do not consider that there are abuses in connection with the present system of recruitment through garden sardars. There have been six or seven prosecutions a year of sardars for misdescribing coolies, etc., in the last three years. In the current year there have been none up to the present. What I mean is that abuses are now very few as compared with what I understand went on before Act VI was passed. I am afraid that if the Act were altogether abolished arkatis would start again, and there would be abuses. Section 90 is not in force in this district, and I do not know about its working. I do not know whether people are recruited from the surrounding Native States; that does not come under my notice.

I think that if the labourers in Assam got better wages, it would be a good thing. I have heard that they do not save anything there. I have also heard complaints of the law which makes a labourer liable to punishment if he stays away for more than seven days from work (Section 193). I would be in favour of paying the return passages of labourers who have worked out their time. I would not allow the contractor's system, even under license; I would have only sardari recruitment. I think managers should take more trouble in choosing the sardars they send down. I have had boys sent down as sardars. Tantis and Ghasis should not be sent: the Ghasi is always a bad character and the Tanti is despised by the Ho, and is kept outside the village. The Ho will not allow the Tanti to drink from the village well, and such a man is of little use down here. I am in favour of retaining registration of labourers, it is a check against possible abuses. I do not consider that people are frightened by the registration proceedings.

I think there is still a certain amount of smuggling of people out of this district by arkatis of contractors, working at Khargpur, etc. When I said that there was still a field for emigration here, I meant that there are many cases of families who are in arrears of rent or owe debts, and some of the members might wish to go away to earn some money. People like this would go more readily, if they made money in Assam and were allowed to come back. I would give a man R6 for the first year and then increase the wages to R8. Wages here are now for a man 2 to 3 annas a day, and are rapidly rising. This he gets without leaving his home, and he has generally some cultivation besides. A man will not leave his home and go far away unless he gets a substantial rise. With new railways projected and mining schemes being taken up, there will soon be a pronounced increase in wages. The lac industry is also a growing one in this district.

SAMBALPUR, 3RD MARCH 1906. **Sambalpur.**

No. 47.—MR. H. C. LIDDELL, I.C.S., *Assistant Commissioner, Sambalpur.*

I have been in Sambalpur since January 1904 and have been Superintendent of Emigration all the time. There are six contractors licensed in the district, but only three are doing any work. Section 90 is in force in the district. The number of registered emigrants excluding dependants has been as follows since the introduction of Act VI:—

	Contractors', Chapter III.	Sardari, Chapter IV and Section 90.	Total.
1901-02 .	1,196	1,450	2,646
1902-03 .	951	1,094	2,045
1903-04 .	671	389	1,060
1904-05 .	287	334	621

There were 3 labourers recruited under Section 90 in 1903-04, and 19 in 1904-05, recruited by five and nine sardars respectively. The figures for emigration in the first two years include 949 and 380 persons recruited in the Feudatory States. In the last two years emigration from the Feudatory States does not appear in the figures given, as it has been held that recruitment of Feudatory States subjects is not covered by the Act. Such recruitment is still going on, as also clandestine recruitment by contractors working from Khargpur. I only hear of this by the fact of unwilling labourers being returned from Goalundo, whom we have never previously heard of. Jharsuguda is a centre for such recruitment; the coolies are taken away as third class passengers, and enquiries are of no good. Even if we get word of persons being abducted to Khargpur, it is useless making enquiries as it is next to impossible to trace the coolies, their names and castes being entirely changed. My opinion is that this illicit traffic is growing. It cannot be stopped here: it is only at Khargpur that action can be taken. I think that the decrease in the figures for emigration is due to the fact of Native States labourers being no longer registered at Sambalpur and to the supply of labour being largely tapped by the Khargpur recruiters. Other reasons for the falling off in recruitment are:—

(1) Ignorance of the conditions of the district, both on the part of garden managers and local agents.

(2) The non-use of privileges, such as Section 90.

(3) The inferior class of sardar employed.

Under (1) I would mention that sometimes on account of short rainfall, parts of the district are on the borderland of famine. The local agent should make use of this by directing the energies of his sardars to the affected area, but on a recent occasion where this opportunity arose in the Chandarpur tract, it was unknown to the local agent until his attention was drawn to it.

Sambalpur. As to (2), the figures I have given show that Section 90 is not made use of. If I wanted coolie on my garden, I would send down the men who have the greatest facilities for recruitment. There is no doubt that Section 90 offers such facilities. With regard to the last cause of falling off in recruitment I would instance the result of the enquiries made in accordance with the instructions issued by the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces in December 1904. As it was found that many undesirable characters were coming down as sardars and also people who did not know a word of Uriya, the question was raised of refusing countersignature on the certificates of such. The Chief Commissioner directed that countersignature should be refused, if the sardar knew no Uriya. In the case of suspected characters, the orders were that the certificates should be countersigned and the fact of the sardar's arrival reported to the police who could watch his movements if necessary. From 1st January 1905 to 30th June 1905 the arrival of 122 sardars was notified to the police. 26 were reported to be of bad character and to have had previous convictions, and of 70 no trace could be found under the names and addresses given. In the case of the 26 men who were previous convicts their certificates were cancelled. In the present year up to date 189 sardars have come down; 7 have up to date been proved to be previous convicts and 104 cannot be traced. In the case of the persons who are untraced, the local agent is communicated with and further particulars called for. But nothing comes of this, as a local agent knows nothing more about the men than any one else. In only two cases were certificates refused countersignature because of sardars not knowing the language. I think that one reason for the giving of false names is that a sardar may want to get away from an unpopular garden; he comes down here and may return to Assam, under another name perhaps, as a contractor's coolie. I think that questioning on the garden would prevent much of this. Even if the man has gone up under a false name and address, there is a good chance, if he is questioned, of his contradicting the tutored address and arousing the garden manager's suspicions. The fact that the police exercise surveillance over sardars does not interfere with recruitment, I should say. If the man is all right, he does not know that his name has been communicated to the police. If the sardar cannot be traced, he goes on with his work and no one knows anything about him. Another matter regarding sardars is that it is no use sending down the same sardar year after year as he exhausts his connection. I would give power in the Act to the magistrate in the recruiting district to refuse countersignature of sardars' certificates somewhat on the lines of the Sambalpur rules.

Sambalpur will be a worse field for recruitment than ever as the most precarious parts of the district have gone into the Central Provinces and they were the best recruiting grounds. Another thing is that the settlement has just been finished, and there will be a large extension of cultivation for which additional labour will be required. I do not think that any extra inducements in Assam will have much effect in getting people to go there. Almost the only person who goes is the man who is broken down and must clear out. The Sambalpuri is very difficult to move as he is much attached to his land. One main reason for Assam being unpopular is that no one comes back finally. If a man does go who has ties here, he knows that he will be able to come back as a sardar. No one here knows anything about the right of private arrest in Assam, and I do not think that this comes into the question. Nor do I think that the length of the contract is much of a deterrent to the class of people who go. There is hardly any movement of labour outside the district. Mr. Foley informed me that he had hardly come across a single Sambalpuri anywhere except in rest-houses on the way to Assam.

I cannot think of emigration without an Act. I do not know personally about the former abuses, but without an Act there are all manner of possibilities of mischief arising. If the Act is withdrawn, the contractors and recruiters will go back to their old methods; they are all the same men.

I think something might be made of repatriation after the term of contract. It might be made optional to give a man land up there or let him come back. That would ease the minds of people who might be thinking of going to Assam.

As to wages, if, as I hear, labourers make money by overtime, why not make the wage all round higher for a heavier day's task. A man in Sambalpur can earn 10 pice and a woman 6 pice with rice at about R2-8 a maund. A higher wage on the gardens would serve as an inducement. At present the inducement is in favour of Sambalpur, where a man can get enough to live on in his home and among his friends and lead an easy life.

There is no doubt that there is a considerable amount of official disfavour towards Assam recruitment. The native registering officer in particular has prejudices against Assam. It would be well if he knew more about conditions there and took a broader view of the labour question.

I would allow contractors' recruiting to continue under license. If you do away with this, your supply of labour will fall. The arkati goes about puffing Assam and is the pioneer of emigration. He helps the sardar indirectly in this way, and he is always breaking up new ground. The people he sends up can come back as sardars and recruit their families and friends. I would at once put a stop to the free recruitment that goes on at Khargpur. The contractors are sometimes deceived by professional emigrants. There are coolies who go the round of the depots for the sake of free board and lodging and a present of clothes. But the contractors are getting wary about such persons.

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I am of opinion that Section 90 should only be used with most carefully picked men. I have had a case in which sardars were sent down to this district with Section 92 certificates. They could not work here as Section 92 does not apply. They stayed on in Sambalpur, while Section 90 permits were sent for from Assam and granted. It cannot be said that Section 90 (*d*) has been complied with in such a case, which requires the presentation of the sardar before the Inspector or Magistrate to ensure that he is a person fit to be licensed under this section. I have seen sardars sent down without the certificate of 6 months' residence on the garden having been signed by the employer. Until you get greater care exercised in the choice of the sardar, I consider that the privileges are undeserved. The Section 90 sardar is at present entirely dependent on the local agent, he has to come to head-quarters with his coolies and work through the local agent. Why not then let him produce his emigrants for registration when he has them at head-quarters, thereby giving some possibility of supervision? With the present class of Section 90 sardar I consider such supervision is required; he is not worthy of the privileges given him. Unless you get a superior man as a sardar I would have registration. I do not think there is anything in registration that deters emigrants. A woman who has been refused under Section 34 can be put up as a sardar's emigrant and passed. There is nothing in the Act to prevent it.

In connection with contractors' and recruiters' licenses I should be inclined to adopt the lines of the Colonial Act, *i.e.*, have no license fees, have strict enquiry as to the contractor's and recruiter's character and charge a capitation fee on the emigrants registered. You then tax the recruiting agency on results, which is I think a fair system. At present enquiries are made through the police as to the antecedents of a man who wants a recruiter's license under Act VI. This may add to the contractor's expenses. I should be inclined to give a trial to allowing contractors to nominate their own recruiters without any police enquiry, on the clear understanding that the contractor is responsible for his recruiters' misdeeds. As a matter of fact there must be an enormous number of unlicensed sub-recruiters at work, though one never hears of them. The contractor would practically continue to work as at present, but he would be very careful if cancellation were made strict. Now he knows that the recruiter is a man approved by the magistrate, with a good report by the police, and it is neither easy nor equitable to hold him liable for a recruiter's going wrong.

I do not like the prospect of having free recruitment for Cachar while the Assam recruiters are under the Act. I think the want of supervision over the former will lead to difficulties and abuses. People would still be very hard to get in this district, and there must be inducements which may not always be straightly worked.

As a magistrate I should be only too pleased to see the Gandas of this district moved to Assam. They are good workers but are unfortunately addicted to thieving. It was mainly on account of the Ganda and the Ghasi that the rules as to countersignature of sardars' certificates were made. One way of getting over the difficulty caused by the rules might be that garden managers should send down a list of intended sardars two months beforehand to be checked in the recruiting districts. Before the two months are up, the magistrate of the recruiting district would report all persons whose names and addresses are not known and who are bad characters. The managers should not then send these down. I should think the Ganda would be glad to go as his life is made very hot for him here. He is under constant control and is always being worried.

No. 48.—Mr. J. M. Casey, *Sambalpur.*

I have been till lately Local Agent of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association at Sambalpur where I have resided for the last 10 years. A very fair supply of labour should be obtained from this district in a normal year. I estimate that garden sardars ought to get 1,200 to 1,300 recruits annually, and contractors about the same number. There has been a marked decrease in the number of labourers recruited from this district by sardars since 1900-01. I attribute this partly to the way in which Act VI of 1901 has been worked, but primarily to good crops. The sardars generally have given me no trouble. I have every year to apply for warrants against absconding sardars. This year I applied at one time for about 55 warrants. These were against the absconders for the whole season out of a total number of 700 sardars. Desertions are most frequent among Gandas. Rules were drawn up by the Local Administration disallowing the countersignature of sardars' licenses if they were foreigners and could not talk the language of the district. I never had any sardars other than natives of this district. I believe that the facts reported to Government were incorrect as the foreigners were not sardars but were arkatis. Two sardars, natives of this district, who had been in Cachar for 5 years, were sent back here to recruit, but were returned to Cachar by the Superintendent of Emigration as they were stated to have been unable to speak Uriya or Laria. That was the only occasion on which I know of the rule as to language having been enforced. Another provision of the rules directed police supervision of suspected characters amongst sardars; that interfered with recruiting, as the sardar was a marked man in his village after the police enquiry, and the headman, being often opposed to emigration, would prevent the sardar entering the village. I am of opinion that there is a sprinkling of bad characters among the sardars, specially among Gandas. The district authorities are favourably disposed towards the emigration of Gandas, but I find them hard to move. There were at one

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time 400 men in the Sambalpur jail under the *badmashi* sections of the Criminal Procedure Code and 200 in Bargarh. I tried to get them to go to Assam, but failed; they said they would sooner have their throats cut than go to Assam. The fact is that Assam has a bad name. One rumour I have heard is that Assam planters tie a coolie up to a tree, light a fire under him, and roast and eat him. They say that if something like this does not go on, how is it that the Province does not fill up. The rumour is probably spread by land-owners to prevent people emigrating. People also think that leeches are very prevalent in Assam. A respectable Muhammadan gentleman told me as a fact that he had seen a family sleeping roped together to prevent the children being carried off by arkatis. These are only a few samples of the stories one hears and are indications of the feeling of the people. The dislike to Assam is a great deal due to the arkatis' misdemeanours. I do not think that the wearing of any kind of particular dress is unpopular with emigrants. Depots here are not disliked, but I believe that the forwarding depots are objected to on account of the cooked food supplied. People prefer to be given dry rations and to cook their own food. An Oraon would strongly object to having to eat food which had been cooked for himself and a Ganda.

If Act VI of 1901 were withdrawn altogether I fear the abuses which existed formerly would arise again. Labour would still be scarce, though a larger number of coolies might be obtained than at present. I think that the coolie would still be worth money to an employer. He would be landed in a far country and might also be under an Act XIII or Section 492, Indian Penal Code, contract, and so long as he is worth money an arkati will work; even if he only got R20 a head, he would go back to his old ways. I think therefore that some control over recruiting is necessary. I consider that the coolie is still too ignorant to be allowed to make his own bargain.

I have never heard of any complaints about Sections 195 and 196 down here, and I should not say that they affect recruiting in any way.

When I said that 2,000 to 2,500 coolies should be got annually from this district, I referred to the district as it stood before the Partition took place. As it is now, our best recruiting grounds have gone to Bilaspur and Raipur.

I should not say that the term of the contract operates as a deterrent on emigration to Assam. I have never heard any objection on this score. The ordinary sardari coolie is a man who has lost his all here and is more or less broken. I tried recruiting for the Duars here, but the experiment failed. I sent up some men on the free system but they returned and said that although the place was good enough they did not like to leave their country. Two Duars managers also came down here to recruit but without success. A system of recruitment for a short term might take on after a while, but I should say it would take some years before that would happen. The Sambalpuri is a stay-at-home person.

It would be a good idea to repatriate coolies on the expiry of their contracts: it would show that people do return to their homes after they have left. The return of sardars does not have so good an effect, because a good many of them are sent down several times over.

I would advocate an increase of wages in Assam, as a coolie here can earn nearly, if not quite, as much as the statutory minimum wage. Emigrants do not understand that they can earn more than the sum specified in their contracts, and I think it would be well if registering officers should explain to them that they can do so. On contract work here a hard-working labourer can earn from R6 to R6-8 a month, and the daily rate is 2½ annas which comes to nearly R5 per month. There is no inducement for a man to leave his country and go to a distant land if he is offered nothing more than what he can get at home.

I think that the grant of land to coolies on the expiry of their contracts would benefit them but not the gardens. It would not probably attract emigrants at first, but eventually it would undoubtedly do so.

I consider that a greater use of Section 90 would be advantageous. It more or less does away with interference by the police. I cannot say that I have found emigrants objecting to registration. I have experienced no difficulty from the police in the case of unregistered coolies sent to Assam under Section 90. I have, however, had so few Section 90 sardars that I cannot give an opinion as to its working.

The class of sardar cannot well be improved as gardens can only send down persons who go up to them, but it would appear that garden managers select their sardars rather casually; with more care in the selection of sardars they would show better results in recruiting.

It is my belief that the police frequently report sardars as not traceable, simply because they do not take the trouble to make enquiries. Cases of this have occurred within my experience. Again sometimes village headmen do not allow sardars to enter their native villages lest they should induce people to emigrate. Another thing that renders identification difficult is that when the sardars were first sent up to Assam they were misdescribed by contractors and they fear to inform the manager of this, especially if it is the case of a second class coolie being sent up as first class. The withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will result in no inconvenience, provided that recruitment for that Valley is carried on entirely through sardars. It is possible, however, that recruiters may nominally recruit for Cachar and *chalan* the people to Assam. As a matter of fact there is very little recruiting for Cachar here. The rates being equal, or nearly so, a contractor would prefer to send his coolies to a place in respect of which there is no registration and no fees are payable.

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No. 49.—MR. F. DEWAR, I.C.S., *Settlement Officer, Sambalpur.*

I have been six years in the Sambalpur district.

In considering the unwillingness of people to emigrate to Assam, I would differentiate between the Kol labourers about head-quarters and agricultural labourers of the villages. The Kol labourer obtains pretty well the Assam wage when employed on roads and buildings in and around head-quarters, *i. e.*, 2½ annas a day, but labourers cannot always be had for these wages. One member of the family is nearly always engaged on the family holding while the others are free to work under contractors. The ordinary agricultural labourer in a village is not nearly so well paid as the Kol labourer. He is generally paid in kind and I do not think that he earns more than ₹2-8 a month of full employment. Agricultural day-labourers are, however, very scarce; at the last census only 18,000 men and 60,000 women were returned as field labourers. These figures indicate that the daily agricultural work of a village is ordinarily done by the small ryot and his women folk. I do not therefore consider that there is much field for emigration from the agricultural labourer class. The small semi-aboriginal ryot is being gradually ousted from his holding by the higher class Hindu cultivator, but owing to the rise in the value of land, due to the construction of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, he receives for his holding sufficient to pay off his debts and to leave him something in hand, which enables him to move to a more remote area, where he clears another holding. There is a good deal of land available for extension of cultivation both in British territory and more especially in the Native States. Sawaras, Gandas and Kharias form the bulk of the daily labourers. If the proposed railway from Raipur to Vizianagram is made, it will attract a certain number of labourers from this district, but the bulk of the labour force will be drawn from the North-West. It will have the effect of raising the price of local Kol labour.

I do not consider that the *gaontias* as a body are so opposed to emigration as the contractors would like to make out. When difficulties with the *gaontia* arise it is generally because a farm servant on annual wages or a day-labourer, who is indebted to the *gaontia*, bolts without paying up his debts. If there was an arrangement for paying off such debts the *gaontia* would usually not object to the labourer leaving. I think that most *gaontias* would be only too glad to see a movement of the Gandas to Assam. Under the new settlement, however, the system of receiving free labour from the ryots for two days at seed time and two days at harvest has been to a certain extent restricted, and this will make the *gaontia* look with more disfavour on the agricultural labourer leaving his village.

No. 50.—MR. G. M. SHANAHAN, *Sambalpur.*

I have lived here 6 years during which I have been at different times a contractor under Act I of 1882, a recruiter under Act XXI of 1883, and a selecting agent under Act VI of 1901.

The right of private arrest conferred on employers by Section 195 of Act VI of 1901 does not adversely affect emigration to Assam as it is not known of by the people in the recruiting districts.

The penal contract is a bar to emigration. I have known a number of individual cases of intending emigrants who would have emigrated if there had been no contract, and of others who would have done so if the term had been shorter. In a few cases I have offered coolies a choice between the Assam Railways and Trading Company's one-year contract for its coal mines with a ₹7 wage and a four-year contract on ₹5-8 on a tea garden. The coolies invariably chose the former, and I understood that the choice was determined as much by the shorter term as by the higher wage.

The Assam labour supply is deficient chiefly because recruiting is confined to limited tracts; that is, to those where aborigines or semi-aborigines are to be found. These areas have been drawn upon for labour for so many years, and the position of labourers as regards the prospect of employment in their own country has so far improved, that the number of emigrants is diminishing. As things are at present, a famine might give an increased supply, but the relief would be temporary. I do not think a permanent improvement is possible until the recruiting areas are extended and more use is made of classes of coolies other than those which now find favour.

Another cause of the shortage is that sardars are generally selected to recruit not so much with reference to their suitability for the work as with reference to the security in the shape of wife and children and chattels which they can leave behind on the garden. Men are often sent down to recruit who have exhausted their connections with the recruiting districts.

The present wage of ₹5-8 is a solid attraction. I believe that coolies who go to Assam do so because they cannot earn the statutory wage in their own country. Nevertheless a higher wage would attract more emigrants. An addition of even eight annas a month would be effectual.

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It would popularise Assam if the labourer were promised that his way home would be paid at the expiry of his contract. Such an obligation might with advantage be tried instead of an increase of pay. With an increased labour supply the extra expense would be more than covered by the saving in the initial cost of the labourer.

The promise of land in Assam with a revenue-free term would attract labour. It would I believe act as a magnet to the Gandas of this district, a criminal class difficult to move but reforming readily on acquiring some land and pretensions to respectability.

It is very important that Government should impress upon all officers that it views emigration to Assam with favor and similar information should be conveyed to village headmen, a class opposed to emigration from motives of self-interest.

The high cost of the labour recruited by sardars is due to the constant drain on particular tracts and to the prosperous conditions which have obtained in those tracts for the last six years. The much higher cost of the labour recruited by contractors is due to the supply of coveted types of coolies being in defect of the demand and to the competition among employers to secure those classes of labour. The Colonies recruit over a wider area and have therefore no difficulty in securing a sufficiency of labour at rates which are very low as compared with those paid by Assam employers. The average rate paid for a Colonial recruit in any one year is probably seldom more than ₹40 delivered in Calcutta. Over a series of years it may be less. Compare this with rates paid by Assam employers for contractors' coolies delivered at Goalundo. In August 1895 the rate was ₹115 and declined in August 1897, a famine year, to ₹55. In December 1899 it was again ₹115 and went down to ₹65 in September 1900, also a famine year. Since Act VI came into force, as much as ₹145 has been paid. The rates I quote are for the best or "first class *jungli*" type of labour. It is thought in Assam that the high cost of contractors' coolies is due to the inherent viciousness of the contractor system. As a matter of fact, the Colonial system which recruits its labour even cheaper than the Assam sardari system, is essentially a contractor system.

If the area of recruiting were enlarged and all possible inducements held out to secure an increased supply of labour, it might still be 3 or 4 years before that supply of labour began to flow into Assam in any volume, and until there was a full flow of labour it would be dangerous to abolish the contract. For the present, a one-year contract at least is necessary to give the coolie time to get accustomed to the conditions of Assam and to protect the manager who imported him from gardens that poach labour. Once there is a sufficient supply of labour on the spot, the penal contract will be unnecessary. But that time has not yet arrived, and the imperfect communications between Assam and the recruiting districts must be counted among retarding causes.

The figures giving the annual results of the work of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association seem to indicate that there has been no falling off in recruiting since Act VI of 1901 came into force. The figures are incomplete because they exclude the work of other recruiting agencies. But as the Association deals with the bulk of the labour recruited for Assam they may be taken as a fair guide. Eliminating years of famine or scarcity as well as each year of recovery succeeding a famine, the eleven years' figures available to me show that in 1894-95, 15,698 adults were recruited by the Association and in 1898-99 12,552 adults. These two years give an average of 14,125 adult recruits, as against the average of 13,918 of the 4 years—1901-02 to 1904-05—years of normal conditions. The difference is immaterial. Nevertheless, I hold that the present Act has been a check to emigration and that if, in spite of the fact, recruiting has not declined, the explanation lies in the presumption that the enhanced wage introduced by the Act has stimulated emigration, and that the Act is accountable only for the loss of an additional and altogether new supply of labour which would have resulted but for restrictions on recruiting. In other words, Act VI of 1901 by enhancing the wage initiated an experiment which appears to have had very promising results. At the same time, by placing restrictions on recruiting it obscured those results, and the results are minimised by the fact that employers, when labour was more plentiful, could afford to make a rigorous selection, but have been obliged of late years to take most of the labour that offered.

The provisions of Act VI of 1901 which have checked recruiting are chiefly those regulating the licensing of contractors and their recruiters and the recruitment of women. I would adopt the Colonial system of licensing, doing away with the present high license fees and substituting a modification of the Colonial "consolidated fee" which is made up of Registration fee ₹1, Stamp fee ₹1, and ₹1 additional. In the case of Assam it should be Registration fee ₹2 and Stamp fee ₹1. This would make a very slight change in procedure. It would kill unlicensed recruiting and benefit legitimate recruiting. At the same time no supervision would be sacrificed as in essentials the two systems are the same.

The registration of women as intending emigrants under Section 34 (*3*) and (*4*) of Act VI of 1901 is a matter of extreme difficulty. In the case of a woman accompanied by her husband or other guardian, it has to be proved that the alleged husband or guardian does stand to her in that relation. In the case of an unaccompanied female it has to be proved that she has no husband or lawful guardian. The method of examination in such cases is a rigorous cross-questioning based on the assumption that lawful guardianship exists and recruitment is irregular, and seems to be directed rather to the breaking down of all proof to the contrary than to eliciting the simple facts. It requires a minute knowledge on the part of woman and

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witness of physical and social facts relating to the woman's native village, of chronological facts, of the topography of places passed on the way from the village to the depot, and, in the case of a married couple, of each other's relatives in every degree of consanguinity and affinity. Trifling and often explicable discrepancies of statement are held sufficient to vitiate the evidence, and any relative is admitted lawful guardian of the woman though he may not be so legally and may never have fulfilled the obligations of a guardian to the woman. As against the expense to which the Assam contractor is put to produce reliable evidence, the way in which his operations are restricted by being unable at times to induce witnesses to give evidence, and the penalties he risks incurring in the recruitment of women, the Colonial recruiter is at liberty to register a woman if her husband does not come to claim her, the registering officer being merely permitted, in doubtful cases, to order her detention for ten days in the depot to give her husband, if she should have one, an opportunity to claim her.

There appears to be no reason why the rules should be stricter in regard to a woman emigrating to Assam, whence she can be readily recovered, than in the case of a woman going to the Colonies, especially in view of the fact that it has been deemed necessary in the case of the Colonies to rule expressly (see Rule 77 of Rules under Act XXI of 1883) that no emigrant vessel shall leave port with less than 40 per cent. of women except for Mauritius for which the percentage is 33. I would suggest that Section 32 (*1*) and (*2*) of Act XXI of 1883 be adopted in place of Section 34(*3*) and (*4*) of Act VI of 1901, and that detention for 15 days be ordered by the registering officer in every case where irregularity is suspected. It is admitted (see extract from Government of Bengal's letter No. 799 of 26th February 1903 accompanying the Government of India's reply No. 1950—19-5, dated the 2nd November 1903, to the Secretary, Indian Tea Association) that the Colonial system of recruiting is peculiarly free from abuses, and it is thought that this is due to the fact that the Colonies recruit from a more advanced section of the population. As a matter of fact, in the Central Provinces, recruiting for the Colonies is carried on side by side with that for Assam. The same class of people is recruited from and the character of the agency employed is the same in either case. A contractor at Jubbulpore personally holds recruiting licenses for both Assam and the Colonies. One of the Colonial emigration agencies recruited for a short time in 1900-1901 in Chota Nagpur the very class of labour so highly prized in Assam, and there is no reason to suppose that the Colonial agencies would not be glad to recruit nearer their own doors but for the fact that they have no need to pay the high prices for Chota Nagpur coolies which Assam is prepared to pay against competitors. If there are no abuses in Colonial recruiting, it is because Act XXI of 1883 provides sufficient safeguards against abuses. Contractors working under Act I of 1882 would not recruit for the Colonies because Act XXI was a severer measure of legislation by comparison. But when Act VI of 1901 came into force, several took to recruiting for the Colonies to provide an outlet for the women emigrants whom they could not hope to register for Assam.

Under the Colonial Act, the provisions as regards depot accommodation and transport are easier. The Colonial sub-depot is equivalent to the Act VI depot and the latter need not be more elaborate than the former.

One prolific cause of abuses was abolished when registration in the district of recruitment was made compulsory. Another, and perhaps the most prolific, cause of abuses still remains in the person of the Pardeshi recruiter. The Pardeshi or, as he is otherwise known, the Mirzapuri or Bhojpuri recruiter, is a heartless scoundrel, boasting that he can by ill-treatment make anyone "willing" in a few minutes to emigrate to Assam. He is daring and depraved enough to stop at no form of abuse known or imaginable. He is the leech of the arkati system of recruiting. He begins by taking a license from a contractor and immediately proceeds to draw away the contractor's connection of village recruiters to himself. He knows all about the current market rate of an Assam coolie and induces these men to pass their coolies through him to the contractor. He obliges the contractor to pay the highest possible rate, and it is here that the competition begins which forces up the price of the Assam recruit. He ruins business by cheating the village recruiter, and all that there is of fraud in arkati recruiting has been invented and taught by him. The Pardeshi recruiter should be remorselessly eradicated. No man should be licensed to recruit in any district who is not a native born and bred of that district. There is no objection to contractors being Pardeshis. They have too great interests at stake and are too much under surveillance to undertake any risks. A contractor will need to be allowed a few Pardeshi peons to escort coolies to the gardens, but these should be first approved on grounds of character by the magistrate and they should not be allowed to work as peons without his certificate. No Pardeshi peons should be allowed to supervise a contractor's recruiting out-agencies in the district.

I would not abolish the contractor. Labour being scarce, the supply he represents should not be cut off. He is absolutely necessary to restore exhausted sardari connections with the old recruiting grounds, and to open up new tracts to sardari recruiting. He is an active propagandist in the cause of emigration to Assam. His recruiters are essentially pioneers of the sardar. They do not compete with him in any way. The recruiter touches a class of the population that the sardar cannot get hold of. The sardar is an amateur whose operations are confined to the neighbourhood of his own village. The recruiter is a professional whose field is the whole district where he maintains friendly relations with a large number of people.

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All recruiting by contractors should be brought under Chapter III of Act VI of 1901. Free recruiting is inseparable from abuses. The system of permitting free recruiting in certain non-notified areas in Bengal perpetuates one of the chief causes of abuses, namely the smuggling of emigrants from districts where Chapter III is in operation to non-notified districts, and it is unjust to the men who struggle to carry on work by legitimate methods under the restrictions of Chapter III. It is these men who pay the bill in the shape of license fees, etc., and it is the free recruiter in the non-notified areas who reaps the benefit. Provided that recruiting under Chapter III were somewhat simplified, the total abolition of free recruiting would not interfere with, but would assist emigration.

If the Act were repealed there would certainly be a recrudescence of all the abuses which existed under Act I of 1882. I think the matter of the contract in Assam and the control of recruitment in the recruiting districts are two distinct questions. It should be possible to remove all the provisions of the Act which apply to the labour districts without relinquishing control of recruiting operations. Recruitment should remain under control until there is a full natural ebb and flow of labour between the recruiting districts and Assam. Such a natural ebb and flow can in time be obtained.

I think that some form of control should continue to be maintained over recruiting for Cachar even if the Act is abolished in the Surma Valley, otherwise abuses will continue as before. Such form of control need not necessarily be a hindrance to recruiting. If recruiting for Cachar is to be unfettered while recruiting for the Assam Valley is to be under strict control, recruiting for Assam will be seriously prejudiced. Men now recruited for Assam will plump solid for Cachar. They will not do so under the style of contractor or recruiter but under that of sardar or daffadar, and there will be nothing to prevent Cachar gardens from employing them. If Cachar employers profess that they mean to employ garden sardars only, they should give guarantees that it will be *bonâ fide* sardari recruiting and nothing else.

I am entirely in favour of every practical facility being given to garden sardars.

No. 51.—*Written Statement put in by* Mr. A. H. Tietkins, *Licensed Contractor, Sambalpur.*

With regard to the points upon which the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee are desirous of obtaining information, I beg to submit the following notes.

In my opinion, the chief cause of the present short supply of tea-garden labour, from this district at least, may be attributed to the fairly good rice crops we have had for the last five or six seasons; although the crops have proved short in parts of the district at times, nothing like famine rates have ever prevailed, hence the great and chief incentive to emigration has been entirely absent. There is, however, but little doubt that to a certain extent the restrictions on recruiting operations by recruiters working under contractors, caused by the strict enforcement of the rules under Act VI of 1901, have tended to reduce the supply of contractors' coolies, restrictions which do not extend to the recruiting operations of sardars. From experience gained as a contractor working through licensed recruiters, I consider the four years' labour contract has a great deal to do with the unpopularity of the service, as I have known of many cases where the intending and otherwise perfectly willing emigrant has refused to proceed when informed that he could not go forward for a shorter term of service. In some such cases the emigrant has yielded to the persuasion of the recruiter and has eventually consented to proceed, but undoubtedly the four years' term of service on the whole is not popular.

That the right of private arrest of absconded coolies conferred by Sections 195 and 196 of Act VI of 1901 on employers in the labour districts, has any deterring effect upon intending emigrants from this or any of the recruiting districts, can, I scarcely think, be the case, for the simple reason that intending emigrants are not likely (unless from sardars or returned emigrants) to hear anything about this being the case, and the sardar is certainly not likely to mention it, his object being primarily to induce as many to proceed as possible, with a view to earning as much commission as he can. I have never myself heard this objection to emigration raised by persons brought in by recruiters. In any case the fact of summary arrest is only likely to deter emigrants from proceeding who have from the very outset no intention of carrying out their contracts to labour, and such recruits are in the interests of the employer better left behind in the recruiting districts.

With regard to the possibility of the repeal of Act VI being followed by abuses, I should require before going into this question to be informed as to the exact nature of the abuses referred to, as I am not aware that abuses, to any great extent at least, ever did exist in the Central Provinces, of which the district of Sambalpur until quite lately formed a part. The greatest and chief source of abuse connected with recruiting for Assam was stopped, when Dhubri was closed as a place for execution of labour contracts. Before that was done this route was largely resorted to by arkatis, principally from Bengal, owing to the facilities it offered to the forwarding surreptitiously of unwilling and illegally recruited people. A few recruiters from the Central Provinces did no doubt also avail themselves of this facility, but never to the same extent as was done by the Bengal recruiters.

As to what measures should now be adopted in order to render service in the tea districts popular, I have no doubt an increase of pay is the most likely to prove effective in bringing

about a desire to emigrate on the part of the people. The present rate of wages offered is certainly not sufficient by itself to induce any man or woman to leave their home unless pressed by scarcity. Wages throughout the recruiting districts have materially increased since the current rates of wages in Assam were originally fixed at the time tea gardens were first opened out. Already labourers, particularly those within touch of large towns in the recruiting districts, are enjoying the benefits of as high, if not of a higher, rate of wage than can be possibly earned in Assam under the service contracts. Where then is the inducement for such people to emigrate? An increase of pay, combined with a shorter term of service, would undoubtedly materially induce and assist emigration.

As regards repatriation of labourers on the termination of their agreements at garden expense or the option of a grant of land with a revenue-free term, I have always considered that the emigrant is entitled to the first, and the second would undoubtedly tend to induce the labourer to settle down near the garden after his term of service, thus obviating the necessity for repatriation and at the same time forming a supply of supplementary labour for the benefit of the garden. This latter inducement should in my opinion be voluntarily offered by the garden manager and proprietor for the good of the estate.

The withdrawal of the power conferred by Sections 195 and 196 would have, as I have already said, no effect in my opinion in assisting emigration in the first instance. Neither would a repeal of Act VI of 1901 have any effect in stimulating emigration, excepting that it would be the means of enabling recruiters to work more freely and would thus ensure a larger supply of labour than is at present possible under all the restrictions imposed upon them by the Act.

The reason for the present high cost of tea garden labour is not far to seek and is simply the outcome of a want of combination amongst tea garden managers, agents and proprietors. Were these gentlemen to combine more closely and come to a firm understanding, to be of course honourably adhered to by each and all, not to pay above certain fixed rates for a certain fixed period to be settled amongst themselves, contractors would have no option but to accept such rates or leave the work.

I scarcely think that an extension of Section 90 of the Act or the granting of further facilities to recruitment by garden sardars would conduce to a larger supply of labour, or result otherwise than in perhaps a saving of trouble to the local agent in the matter of registration. The average results of sardari recruiting in this district for the past three seasons work out, I understand, at 1·07 adults per sardar. This means that while some sardars succeeded in bringing in recruits, probably their own relatives principally, the others did absolutely nothing. Where then would be the advantage of extending facilities to people who show by results their inability to recruit? The results would be probably the same were further facilities given them. It is rather to the recruiter working under contractors that facilities should be given, if a larger supply of labour is wanted, and it would be indeed a suicidal policy on the part of the tea garden representatives to endeavour to close them down.

The anomaly of leaving one part of the recruiting districts open to free recruiting under Section 92 of the Act, while others are left under the restrictions of the Act, can only tend one way, that of fostering the smuggling of emigrants from the restricted districts over to the free districts, thus frustrating one of the objects of the Act, namely, restricting the registration of coolies to the district of recruitment.

As regards the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley, it stands to reason that contractors will always prefer to send their coolies to those labour districts offering the least difficulties to their primary recruitment, even for a lower rate of commission. Consequently should Act VI of 1901 be withdrawn from the Surma Valley, the gardens of the Upper Assam Valley will have to pay commensurately higher rates for labourers to compensate for the disadvantages of supplying their requirements. Again, should free recruiting for the Surma Valley districts be carried on side by side with recruiting for the Assam Valley under the Act, what would there be to prevent labourers recruited under the free system and forwarded ostensibly to Surma Valley gardens being smuggled into Assam as free labourers *vid* the Assam-Bengal Railway? When once in the railway carriages at Chandpur their destination could always be very easily changed.

In conclusion, my opinion is that in order to obtain a large supply of labour, a partial repeal of Act VI of 1901 is in the first place necessary, in respect to the restrictions enforced upon recruiters working under contractors. I am not in favour of doing away with the Act altogether. For the present at least the rules under which recruiting is carried on should be simplified. No license fees for either contractors or recruiters should be levied, the work is not of a sufficiently remunerative nature to allow of this being done; let a higher fee for registration be imposed if necessary. In the case of single women, witnesses who are really difficult to procure of a trustworthy nature, should be dispensed with, all women being registered if willing, but detained for eight or ten days before being put under agreements, to allow of claims being made by husbands or relatives. All emigrants may justly be detained for three days at least after being put under agreements, to allow them to change their minds. Let all applicants for licenses to recruit get licenses unless they are notoriously bad characters. Why should a man be debarred from earning an honest livelihood because he has years back been mixed up in an assault case and got imprisonment? The man has probably reformed since and is all the more likely not to break the laws again. Further, the right of appeal against the

Sambalpur. confiscation of his license has under the Act been withheld from the recruiter; this is but scant justice to him and should certainly be altered.

Alterations in the Act on the above lines coupled with a shorter term of service and increased rate of wages to the labourer, would in my opinion go far towards bringing about the desired increase in the supply of labour for the labour districts.

No. 52.—Mr. J. Saubolle, *Sambalpur*.

I had until recently been engaged in recruiting for 20 years. I have been a free and a licensed contractor under Act I of 1882. I have been a local agent in Hazaribagh and Sambalpur, and I have been a licensed contractor under Act VI, and I have been a selecting agent under Act I.

I consider the contractor's license fee and also the license fee for the recruiter too high. After paying R10 fee and R10 advance the contractor is more or less in the hands of his recruiter who may at any time go off to another employer. He cannot afford to be too particular about the coolies brought to him by a recruiter who has cost him so much money. I would have a capitation fee on each coolie registered in place of these license fees.

The provisions of Section 34 are unnecessary and also lead to malpractices; witnesses are in many cases bought up men. I would put single women recruited by recruiters on the same footing as those recruited by sardars. Recruiting is called by the people "selling"; it is looked upon as selling into slavery. Suppose that a young woman wishes to go to Assam and I produce her father and prove by two witnesses that he is her father and he gives his consent to emigrating, when he goes back to his village he will be reproached by every one with having "sold" his daughter, and for fear of this the father or other relative declines to come forward publicly, even when perfectly willing that the girl should emigrate.

The police enquiry before giving licenses to recruiters is useless; the police when bribed will recommend bad characters for a license, while the enquiry deters men, to whom there is no valid objection, from applying for a license. The police should be more closely supervised in this work.

At present if a licensed recruiter goes into a Native State his license is cancelled; the best field for recruitment is in the Native States and I see no reason why recruiters should not be allowed to go there at their own wish. I have had a licensed recruiter's license cancelled for the above reason. I would propose to have Native States' coolies registered in Sambalpur; if they are allowed to go forward free there is an opening for malpractices. At present no resident in a Native State can get a recruiter's license because he cannot get the necessary police certificate. I would allow such a man to take out a license and make no enquiry as to where he subsequently got his coolies from. Now such a man who wants a license has to give a false address, and then bribe the police not to show him up.

The requirements of Assam for coolies cannot be met from the present recruiting area. I would suggest that healthy gardens take North-Western coolies on a nine months' agreement; they could probably stand the climate for a year.

Under Act VI, I sent about as many women as men; as a free contractor under the old Act, I sent about 5 women to 1 man, the extra women are lost owing to the restrictions of the present Act. More recruiters would bring in more labour. I see no reason why the present supply of contractors' coolies should not be doubled if the modifications of the Act which I have proposed are brought into force.

I am not in favour of free recruiting so long as the labour in Assam is not really free; I would have all recruiters licensed. So long as a contract of any kind, say under Section 492, Indian Penal Code, remains, there will be abuses unless there is registration in the district of recruitment. The agency employed is too bad to allow one to dispense with production before a Court in the district of recruitment.

Registering officers should be made to assist and not to obstruct legitimate emigration. These officers are generally natives who view emigration as slavery, and they can question a coolie in a way to make him unwilling.

I object to a contractor being liable to have his license cancelled for the misdeeds of his recruiters.

I think that planters should deal direct with the contractor; at present the contractor is dependent on a selecting agent. I would allow the contractor to put the coolie on contract on behalf of the employer. I object to the planter being at liberty to reject a coolie who has been selected by the selecting agent.

I should object to free recruiting for Cachar going on in the same district as licensed recruiting for Assam. It would mean that actually all the recruiting would be done on the free system and abuses would arise. I would not object to the Cachar sardars being free, but all recruiters should be under control. Registration properly conducted does not deter intending emigrants; on the contrary, in my opinion it makes emigration popular; it gives confidence by showing that emigration has the approval of Government.

It would be against the interests of the tea industry to abolish the contractor's system; the recruiter helps the work of the garden sardar by constantly recommending emigration, and the

sardar also makes recruiting popular because people see that men can return from Assam. A daffadar is usually a North-Wester and has half a dozen recruiters under him ; such a daffadar knows all about the rates and he will get a price which leaves the contractor only R10 profit. If a recruiter comes direct to the contractor he gets here between R40 and R60 for a first class coolie. The recruiter is not paid except by way of advances till the coolie is shipped at Goalundo. Neither the term of contract nor the wage makes any difference in the actual recruiting of the coolie, they are not really known to the coolie till he comes to the depot ; the recruiter has held out very different promises. However, when informed of the real conditions, the coolie is quite pleased with them because the agricultural labourer in this district who is paid in kind does not earn more than R3-8 a month. I know this because I have myself recently engaged a couple of agricultural labourers. Such a man may also earn another 8 annas a month from a patch of paddy which is sown for him free. These wages are paid mostly at harvest time in a lump ; apart from this he only gets just enough to keep him alive. The raising of wages would not induce more emigrants. The recruiter does not know whether a coolie is to go to a coal mine on R7 or to a tea garden on R5. If I ask a batch of coolies in the depot which they would prefer, they would of course choose the R7 service. It depends on the selector whether the coolie goes to the mine or the garden. The local *jungli* coolie is so ignorant that the mere promise of pay means nothing to him ; he does not know what it is until he gets it into his hands. If I send up a mixed batch of R7 and R5 coolies, the R5 men never make any objection before the registering officer or on the road. In this part of the country there is no more intelligent class who would be attracted by the promise of a higher wage. You might find such a class farther west in Jubbulpore and Hoshangabad, but it is doubtful whether they would stand the climate.

Assam could get a sufficient supply of labour if the jungly tracts were reserved entirely for recruiting for the unhealthy parts of Assam, and healthy gardens made to take only labour of an inferior class.

Every landlord and *gaontia* in this district is opposed to recruiting ; they none of them want their ryots to leave. If they get to know that there is a recruiter in the village they will put every obstacle in his way and warn the villagers against him. A police enquiry lets the villager know on what business both the recruiter and the garden sardar are engaged.

Contractors practically never pay up the debts of intending emigrants. I have not had more than one or two such cases out of many thousand coolies. I do not think that the Gandas of this district are likely to move; the Sambalpuri is very unwilling to move ; even if a constable is transferred to another part of the district he will resign.

6TH MARCH 1906.

(MESSRS. BOMPAS AND GORDON *present.*)

No. 53.—REV. P. E. HEBERLET, *Baptist Mission, Sambalpur.*

I came to the district in 1879. The idea of emigration to Assam is unpopular. People do not understand what becomes of all the emigrants and why so many are wanted and why they do not return.

The recruiter works in an underhand and secret way : a young man or woman disappears without giving any information to their relatives, this makes the whole system extremely unpopular. If the recruiter had to report himself to the *gaontia* and take the signature of the *gaontia* in a book before removing a coolie from a village, it would give the people confidence, and once confidence was established emigration would increase. I would have kotwars report at the thana at the weekly parade the fact that a coolie had been recruited from their village.

The garden sardar is as much distrusted by the people as the recruiter, he is supposed to be quite as willing to sell his friends. A garden sardar only comes for a short visit and does not come back and settle down with money in his pocket. If people returned and settled down in that way it would restore confidence. Production of the intending emigrant before a magistrate 20 or 30 miles away does not insure sufficient publicity.

It would be an excellent thing if it were arranged that news should be sent once a year to a man's village of where he is and how he is doing in Assam.

There are many of the poorest class whom I should be glad to see go to Assam, if I were satisfied that conditions were satisfactory and that the coolie was properly protected from illtreatment at the hands of his employer. If coolies were repatriated at the expiry of their contract, it would be the best thing for emigration. It is the spiriting away of people without the knowledge of their relatives which is the main cause of the unpopularity of the arkati, who is at present feared as much as a man-eating tiger.

There are many *gaontias* who would gladly see the Gandas of the village removed to Assam. There are about 80,000 Gandas in the district, of whom half might emigrate with advantage to themselves. A wage of R5-8 a month is a sufficient inducement to a Ganda in this district ; if anything extra is offered it should take the form of his passage money home at the expiry of his contract.

I have not heard the term of four years objected to.

Nagpur.

NAGPUR, 7TH MARCH 1906.

(MESSRS. ROBERTSON AND MILNE AND CAPTAIN KENNEDY *present.*)

No. 54.—MR. A. D. SANDERS, *Assistant Manager, Central Provinces Prospecting Syndicate, Kampti.*

I have been connected with manganese working for six years in the Central Provinces. My syndicate employ between 3,000 and 4,000 labourers on the manganese mines in the Nagpur, Bhandara and Balaghat districts. There is very great scarcity of local labour; we have to import much of our labour from Chhattisgarh and from the north of the Central Provinces, particularly Jubbulpore, Seoni and Mandla. We find it very hard to get people to come even from there. The scarcity of labour has got more and more pronounced since we started; there seems to be no local labour whatever to spare, the labourers are not there. All the work at the mines is done on petty contract. The daily wage of a man is reckoned to be 5 annas and of a woman about 3 annas. That is the very lowest the labourers get and it is to be had every day they like to work. In Balaghat and Bhandara there is not enough labour for the requirements of the districts and it would be a very serious thing for the local industries if any labour were taken away for Assam or elsewhere. We have considerable trouble with the Chhattisgarhis, they take advances from the contractors and then run away. Some of the people we employ are more constant workers than others, the imported workers are steadier than the local ones; the latter are given to taking off time as soon as they have earned a little money. I think that there would be still more of this, if the wages were raised. The workers would have their requirements satisfied by working for shorter and more broken periods than they do now. When we started in 1900 the coolies employed in loading the railway wagons used to work continuously. The rates are now exactly doubled and the workers take whatever days off they want.

No. 55.—KHAN BAHADUR DADABHAI BEZONJI, *Manager, Empress Mills, Nagpur.*

During the last half-year ending December 1905, we had a daily average of 5,805 work-people on our muster rolls of whom a daily average of 4,837 was present. We require at least 5,300 to be present to keep all our work efficiently going at the mills. For the last three years, we have invariably had to struggle to get through our work owing to scarcity of labour. We could extend our mills if we could get about 2,000 work-people more. The demand for our manufactures is much greater than we can supply.

We tried last year to import labour from the Chhattisgarh districts and from the United Provinces, but without success. About 100 men were imported from the United Provinces, 25 from Chhattisgarh, and 27 from Jaipur. But with the exception of 12, all have run away. We have had to increase the wages lately. We pay coolies from R7½ to R10 per month. Machine minders earn from R10 to R18; boys over 14 attending spinning frames R7 to R9½; under 14, half this sum. Women earn from R5 to R7½; girls under 14 half the sum.

The percentage of men, women and children employed is 67, 18 and 15 respectively.

We have a system of prizes for good work and regular attendance. The prizes are distributed yearly. We have also a pension fund for work-people only, and a provident fund to which there are 319 subscribers.

We have 7 ginning and press factories in which we employ 400 men and 230 women during the cotton season which lasts for 5 months in the year. The men are paid at R8 per month and the women at R5 per month. The press *hamals* earn about R16 per month. The scarcity of labour at even these small factories which are in the Wardha district and Berar is a subject of complaint.

I have prepared a statement showing the irregular attendance of the work-people. It shows that a large proportion of the workers do not work steadily throughout the month. One-fourth of the adult hands do not work more than 20 days in the month. I attribute this in the main to their being able to earn enough money by broken periods to keep them in comfort. This is particularly the case where there are several members of a family employed, and where the joint earnings may easily be over R20 or R30 a month.

No. 56.—RAO BAHADUR RAJARAM SITARAM DIXIT, *Contractor, Nagpur.*

I have been working as a Railway and Public Works Department contractor for the last 30 years. Within the past 10 years it has been very difficult to obtain labour both in Nagpur itself and in the surrounding districts. I attribute the scarcity of labour to the fact that famine and plague have reduced the numbers of the labouring classes within the last few years. The field of employment has also increased in several districts, of which the most important has been the cotton industry. In Nagpur there are now 12 ginning factories, while 10 years ago there was only one. At several other places in this district also ginning factories have sprung up. The acreage under cotton has largely increased. Next there is the manganese industry, which is a new development. Then there is irrigation work in Bhandara and

Nagpur.

Balaghat, where important projects are now in progress. The extension of railways has also greatly increased the demand for labour. The result is that wages have risen. Formerly we used to pay unskilled labour from 2½ to 3 annas per diem, and we now pay from 4 to 5 annas. This rise has taken place within the last 4 or 5 years. Women used to receive 1½ annas a day but are now paid from 2½ to 3 annas. In fact there is a great scarcity of labour here, and the cultivators also cannot obtain all the labour they require in the busy season of the year to get their field work completed in time. In my opinion there is no field whatever for emigration from this part of the country to Assam.

Up to about 3 years ago it was always possible to obtain labour for Nagpur from the neighbouring rice districts of Balaghat and Bhandara. By sending agents there I had no difficulty in getting from 500 to 1,000 men from these districts at any time, but last year in spite of all my efforts I could only get 70. About 8 or 9 years ago I had taken a contract on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway at Sholapur and with one month's notice got 2,000 labourers from Bhandara and Balaghat, though they had to go 1,000 miles from their homes and to work for 2½ years. The reasons for the shortage are those which I have already given, *viz.*, the drop in the population and the strong demand for labour locally.

One of the great faults of the present system of recruitment for Assam is that not a pice of the money spent goes to the emigrant. The urgent need is that the money paid should go to the labourer. I am in favour of a free system of labour. I have found that it is best not to put labourers under contract. There may be some difficulty at first, as a percentage of the labourers engaged will disappear with their advances, but the majority will stay and make money, and as news of their success reaches their people at home others come to the work. The 2,000 labourers at Sholapur, whom I have mentioned, were not put under contract. I have never thought it expedient to bring civil suits in court to recover advances from absconders. People like to feel themselves free and not to be subject to any penalty. I recruit my labour through *mukaddams*, who are my paid servants on ₹10 or ₹15 per month. They are given a commission at the end of a contract, if the work has been done satisfactorily and they have exercised proper supervision over the work of their gangs.

No. 57.—Mr. R. H. Craddock, C.S.I., *Commissioner of the Nagpur Division.*

There is now great scarcity of local labour in the two districts of Bhandara and Balaghat, from which alone in this Division there was formerly any appreciable recruitment for Assam. There is every year a complaint about the growing difficulty in getting labour for transplantation of the rice and for other agricultural operations. I have worked out figures which show the cropped area of the districts and the population there is to work it:—

Statement showing cropped area of the Bhandara and Balaghat districts, in three selected years, viz., *before the famines, after the famines and at present, also population before the famines and now.*

District.	Cropped area.			Population.	
	1895-96.	1901-02.	1904-05.	Census of 1891.	Census of 1901.
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.		
Bhandara . .	841,070	793,200	845,000	742,850	663,062
Balaghat . . .	428,750	387,700	425,000	382,240	325,371

The area under crop has recovered, while the population has not. The adult population is very short since the famines, and, although the birth-rate has recently been high, it will not affect the available labour supply for a number of years until the children born reach manhood. There has again been great development in the cotton industry in recent years. In the Nagpur district alone the area under cotton has almost trebled in the last decade, and the Wardha district and Berar have also extended cultivation of cotton largely. There has been a greatly increased demand for labour for plucking the cotton and for transporting it, apart from the employment given by cotton mills and ginning factories.

Besides the requirements of agricultural labour, there are the following extended fields for employment of unskilled workers, *viz.*, manganese mines, railways and public works including irrigation. Up till six years ago there were no manganese mines in existence, and the programme of public works was a small one. There has been a marked advance in the extent of public works undertaken, particularly in connection with irrigation which is an entirely new development. The construction of the Satpura railway has now been finished, but in its place construction has been begun on the Gondia-Chanda line, which will be 220 miles in length with its branches.

Nagpur.

The conclusion to which I have come is that there was formerly, at least in bad years, some surplus of labour in the Bhandara and Balaghat districts. Part of it was cleared off by emigration to Assam, large numbers having gone in 1896 and 1897, and part by the famines of 1896-97 and 1899-1900. The result of the repeated failures of the rice crops, which have suffered in other years besides the actual famine years, has also been that a considerable proportion of the population has gone to Berar for good, where the cotton industry has thriven. The consequence of all this is that there is now not enough labour for local requirements and there is, in my opinion, no field for emigration to Assam. The people are not there to go, and there is such a demand for labour locally that the rates of wages are high and the workers are very well off.

I am of opinion that some system of registration would certainly be necessary, even if Act VI were abolished. I would at least have this to begin with; it might gradually be given up, if recruitment took place on perfectly straight lines. Without registration I think that abuses would be likely to again arise. I do not consider that registration is objected to by the emigrants; it is the recruiter and sardar who find it irksome and would like to get rid of it. Registration in the district of recruitment could be retained while abolishing all the part of the Act that relates to Assam. You simply want to know that the coolie is aware where he is going and that he is going willingly.

Apart from there being no surplus labour available here for Assam, it is impossible to expect people to go unless you largely increase the wage. A labourer can easily make R8 or R10 a month on the manganese mines, and he is not likely to want to go to Assam unless he gets considerably more. Unless Assam can afford to compete with the local industries, it cannot expect to get labour.

Raipur.

RAIPUR, 8TH MARCH 1906.

(MESSRS. ROBERTSON AND MILNE AND CAPTAIN KENNEDY *present*).

No. 58.—MR. A. B. NAPIER, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Raipur.*

I have been Deputy Commissioner of Raipur since February 1903. The number of people who go to Assam is very small compared with the number who go to Bengal. There is a considerable movement of population towards the coal mines, but it is temporary. Some people stay perhaps for two years, but the general rule is to go after the rice harvest in December and return in July. I think one reason for the dislike to Assam is that people who go there are lost for ever. There is the idea that going to Assam is something like being transported. I do not think this idea arises from the labourers being confined to lines, nor to their being subject to private arrest if they leave the gardens. But it is the great distance and the fact that one never meets a returned coolie that must be at the root of the idea. I do not know that the abuses which formerly prevailed in connection with recruitment have prejudicially affected emigration, but I should say they had.

The number of emigrants for the last three years have been as follows:—

	Chapter III.	Chapter IV.	Section 90.	Total.
1902-03	870	589	—	1,459
1903-04	466	275	45	786
1904-05	179	260	27	466

In 1902 the rice crop failed and a number of people went to Assam. Without a failure of crops I do not think there is much probability of emigration increasing. I do not consider that in this district there is a very great field for emigration. There is an enormous uncultivated area, both in the *khalsa* and in the zemindaris. When the new irrigation projects have been started, the land will carry a much larger population. In any case people who do want to go outside the district for employment prefer to go to Bengal, where they can get good wages and can return when they please. In the interior a farm servant can be got on R4 per month, but most of the farm servants are paid by a share of the produce. The wages of a day labourer is ordinarily 2 annas; in more remote parts 1½ annas. There is a large amount of casual labour in the district; the staple crop is rice, and all rice districts want a great deal of labour in the cultivating season and much is also employed in the slack season in repairing the rice embankments. There is a great extent of employment also afforded by the fact that the centre of the district is denuded of wood; timber and fuel have to be brought from a distance to the more important bazaars and this gives work to a great many people.

I do not consider that the offer of increased inducements will have much effect on recruitment. As a matter of fact, people are now told all manner of tales about the advantages of Assam. But it is only when a man is hopelessly broken that he goes there, when he does not think that he could be worse off wherever he goes. There is another class of people who go, namely those who have had a family quarrel, the youth who has had trouble with his father or the wife who wants to leave her husband. For these also, the actual inducements are really of no account.

I believe that the ordinary sardar who comes down from Assam does not do much recruitment himself; there is a good deal of the work done by all manner of people; the village

bad bargain brings in coolies or puts the sardar on the track of a person likely to go. It is these people who are under no control that do most of the misrepresentation that takes place. Wrong names and addresses are given so that no subsequent trace can be found of the people who are taken away. I have also known of cases where garden sardars have sold their coolies to contractors. I do not believe that the system can be got to work straight, without the most elaborate precautions which would choke off recruiting altogether. I am strongly of opinion that the Act should not be withdrawn, at least as regards the recruiting districts. Supervision is absolutely necessary, or abuses will be rife. **Raipur.**

If the four years' contract is withdrawn in Assam, it might make people more ready to go. And a different class might be tapped, but I doubt it. It would probably take a number of years for the new order of things to be known and believed in. It might have a good effect if people were allowed to go up for one or perhaps two years, if they got returned at the end of it. This might open out a new field.

There are a large number of Chamars in this district; they are low caste cultivators and farm labourers. The Chamar is a troublesome person. He is all right and will work steadily when he is under good control, but he cannot be trusted; he has no respect for law and order, he is very clannish and takes up his caste-fellow's quarrels. I should have no objection to seeing a movement amongst Chamars towards Assam. Mr. Gibbes, the Colonial Agent, told me that in the Colonies the Chamars were thought highly of as workers. The offer of land would be an inducement to the Chamar, if he could be got to believe it. If an Assam planter could bring down a substantial lot of Chamars from a garden and find out the part of the country they come from, my idea is that he would get others to join them in Assam. I do not believe the ordinary sardar is good enough for creating such an impression, and that is why he does not succeed.

I think that there will be great difficulty if we have free recruitment for the Surma Valley side by side with Act recruitment for Assam. It will simply mean that people will be taken away nominally for Sylhet and Cachar, but will be got to change their minds on the way up, if they are wanted to. I do not think that emigrants object to registration, I have never heard of it. It is only the emigrant who is running away from his relatives who might object to registration, but I have never heard of a case occurring. All that such a man has to do is to give a wrong name and address.

No. 59.—Mr. S. M. Chitnavis, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Drug.*

I was for four years Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur until the commencement of the present year. There used to be considerable emigration to Assam, but it has decreased greatly in recent years. I attribute the decrease to agricultural prosperity, control of recruitment in the Native States, and the competition of neighbouring industries, such as the Jherriah coal fields, where labourers are not tied down by contracts. There is also construction work on railways on the Asansole side.

I do not think that emigration to Assam is popular, principally because people are tied down by a contract to labour for four years and cannot return to their homes when they desire to do so. Kols, Oraons and a few Gandas form the bulk of the emigrants at present. A good many of them go to Assam because of specious promises. Some emigrants also are deceived into going; they are told that they will get work somewhere near at hand but eventually find themselves sent on to Assam; others go because they have been convicted of offences and some of course go willingly. People who are fairly well off do not emigrate. The Sambalpuri is, as a rule, not industrious, and if he can make enough to live on at home, he is quite content. An increase in the rate of wages, the abolition of the penal contract, and the grant of facilities for return to their homes would, however, probably attract a larger number of emigrants to Assam. I am of opinion that the offer of land with a revenue-free term might be tried, but I cannot say what its effect would be.

As regards sardari recruiting, I do not think that the proper class of men are sent down as sardars. Many of them come down only for a holiday and it is not to their interest to take away everybody they might, as they like to leave some of their friends behind in order to have an excuse for another trip. The sardari system is freer from abuses than the contractors' system, but there are still abuses, as sardars sometimes employ unlicensed recruiters to get coolies for them in the same way as contractors do. I have known sardars from Bilaspur and Raipur being sent to recruit in Sambalpur. They did not know Uriya. No Pardeshi sardars were sent down to Sambalpur as far as I know. There are Pardeshi arkatis working for contractors. I do not think that the Pardeshi arkati is a good man.

I am not in favour of the abolition of the Act as far as the recruiting districts are concerned. If the Act were repealed some rules for the supervision of recruiting would undoubtedly be necessary, otherwise abuses would be frequent. I do not consider that registration deters *bonâ fide* emigrants. I cannot recollect any case of a registering officer having dissuaded people from going to Assam.

I am inclined to think that the effect of the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will be that the districts of Cachar and Sylhet will draw more labour. There will also be a danger of the occurrence of abuses in connection with emigration to those districts.

Raipur.

The free depots at Midnapur, Khargpur, etc., are productive of many abuses. People from Sambalpur were smuggled out to the free depots, and sometimes emigrants who had been rejected at Sambalpur were taken down to a free depot and *challaned* from there to Assam. I am of opinion that all districts should be notified under Section 3 and free recruiting by contractors stopped. Some of the Sambalpur contractors have opened depots in the non-notified districts in the names of their relations, and this arrangement enables them to pass on rejections to the free depots. By rejections I mean people who have not been selected by the selecting agent and persons who have expressed their unwillingness to emigrate before the registering officer. The latter are tempted with fresh promises and induced to go.

To sum up, I do not think that there is much chance of obtaining a supply of labour from Sambalpur. The harvests have been very good in the last three or four years. The people are very well off and will not leave their homes.

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BILASPUR, 9TH MARCH 1906.

No. 60.—REV. E. M. GORDON, *Foreign Christian Missionary Society, Bilaspur.*

I have been 15 years in this district.

There is certainly a prejudice against Assam among the people; it is said to be a country of fever and leeches. In the nineties there were a good many complaints of abuses connected with recruiting, but they do not seem to be so frequent now. The census figures show that the population of the district decreased by 151,000 in the decade 1891-1901, and it seems to me that the supply of local labour is less adequate to local demands than formerly, no doubt owing to this decrease. I believe that there is a considerable amount of land which has gone out of cultivation. In recent years the Bilaspuri has taken to going to work at Khargpur and Kidderpore. They go away for a few months at a time. A coolie here earns 2 annas a day and a woman 5 pice. There is a strong prejudice against arkatis here, and I believe that garden sardars are also always suspected because people are taken away without the knowledge of their relations. It is also believed that the cost of buying or recruiting a coolie is deducted from his wages when he gets to Assam. I think that owing to the competition of Khargpur and Kidderpore there will be less and less labour available for Assam.

If there were a one-year contract and the coolie were sent home at the end of the year with his earnings, emigration would be more popular. I have only known two returned coolies myself in 15 years, and my muktiar could only tell me of four. The fact that people do not come back makes the idea of emigration unpopular.

No. 61.—MR. C. A. TURTON, *Local Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Bilaspur.*

I have been in Bilaspur for 9 months. Before that I was in Assam for 19 years as tea garden manager and part proprietor.

Though the available supply of labour in this district has been largely indented upon, I am of opinion that there is a good deal more obtainable. Besides tea gardens, existing railways, coal mines, manganese mines, and new railways which are under construction, employ many labourers from this district. I think that the Assam tea gardens can successfully compete with other industries for the supply of labour under certain conditions. I am at present introducing a system of paying off the debts of intending emigrants which average about ₹5 per head or of giving them a bonus in order to induce them to leave their homes. This procedure has had a good effect. The bonus varies from ₹3 to ₹10 per head; ₹10 is the limit. If the amount of the bonus were increased, it would attract more people. I have recruited 1,980 labourers during the 8 months of this year, as compared with 1,361 for the whole of last year. This includes the out-agencies of Raipur, Balaghat and Bhandara. The increase is partly due to a partial failure of the crops, and to a considerable extent to the payment of the bonus or settlement of debts.

There is a general prejudice against Assam among the people of this district. I consider that the arkati is at the root of the evil; this I can say from my experience in Assam supplemented by the knowledge I have acquired in the recruiting districts. As regards the arkati, I am of opinion that he is a necessary evil so far as opening up a new Province or district is concerned, but when this is accomplished and a free flow of sardars arrive from the gardens picked from the recruited families, the sooner the arkati disappears from the scene the better it would be for sardari recruiting. It is quite impossible for sardars and arkatis to work side by side. When the arkati disappears the sardar will come by his own. The arkati's malpractices are only too well known and these malpractices leave their mark behind. The arkati's name is hated and dreaded by the villagers, but he has money behind him which the sardar has not. The arkati brings discredit upon recruiting generally and the sardar suffers accordingly. Thus natives of all classes have come to look upon recruitment as a species of press-ganging and slavery, and I am afraid that the court officials and the police are too

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often imbued with the same idea and do not distinguish between arkati and sardari recruiting. I know also of at least one Diwan of a Native State who is of that opinion. The arkati system is full of evils and malpractices, whereas the sardari system is a straightforward clean business, or would be so if the arkati did not exist. There are occasions when the sardar will imitate the arkati's tricks, but they are few, and when they occur the sardar has taken to them perhaps in self-defence when in competition with the arkati. Again, if the arkati ceased to exist, there would be no temptation for the sardar to sell his coolies to him, thus raising the cost of recruitment and causing the estate to pay double and treble for the very coolies it had originally recruited by its own sardar, if indeed it were fortunate enough to get the coolies at all, as the chances are they might be sent to another garden. My proposal would therefore be to entirely do away with contractor's recruiting except to open up a new district. I think that the supply of labour for the Assam Valley would be considerably increased if the contractor's system were abolished. It would result in a great reduction in the cost of the coolie and would give confidence to the villagers and remove the prejudices of officials as regards Assam recruiting.

The interference of the police and of malguzars and the formalities in court, which often result in the lengthy detention of emigrants, operate as a deterrent on emigration to Assam. Malguzars object to people leaving their villages as this results in loss of labour, and the police back them up. I have had a complaint lately of a sardar, who had refused to pay a bribe to a policeman, being beaten and having his coolies taken away at the Champa railway station; the case is now under enquiry. Great delay is caused by the registering officer's being unable to register emigrants at once owing to press of other work. In this district there is practically only one magistrate at head-quarters during the cold weather, and he is in charge of criminal work and of the treasury as well as of the work of registering coolies. The mode of interrogation of emigrants adopted by some registering officers is apt to deter people from going to Assam. I have myself heard a registering officer say, "Do you know where you are going? Do you know that Assam is a long way off, further than Calcutta?" This coming from a magistrate is likely to disconcert an intending emigrant, who might even misconstrue it as an order not to go. I am of opinion that registration is desirable, but I take objection to the manner in which it is often carried out. Coolies look on registration as a sort of protection and it is not unpopular with them.

This year considerable use has been made of Section 90. Up to date 308 garden sardars appointed under that section have recruited 328 emigrants. The employment of this section does away with all delays due to the necessity for attending at court.

I have found no objection on the part of emigrants to using our depots. They are allowed to cook their own meals, if they prefer to do so. Several sardars have objected to the red coats formerly supplied. They said they were too conspicuous and made the emigrants look like convicts.

I do not think that the four years' contract acts as a deterrent on emigration. Such a contract is necessary for badly situated gardens, but some other gardens do not require a contract at all. When Section 90 becomes more generally used, I am of opinion that an Act XIII contract for one year, given on the garden, will be sufficient, and that a natural flow of labour will be attracted to Assam. Coolies do not object to the discipline obtaining on gardens when they get used to it.

It would be a good idea to give time-expired coolies grants of land near the tea garden, so that they might settle down.

In my opinion the offer of a higher wage would attract more labour, but it is a question whether the industry can afford it. The fact that a labourer can earn considerably more than the minimum wage by the ticca work should certainly be stated in the contract.

It would have an excellent effect if coolies after serving a year or two on a garden were given leave to return to their homes for a holiday, the estate paying their way. This would create confidence among the villagers and they would see that Assam is not a penal settlement. I believe that the promise of repatriation on the expiry of the agreement would attract more labourers, but in that case the period of the agreement should be extended to five years.

Gardens cannot send down a better class of men as sardars than they do at present—they can only use the material they have got,—but the manager should carefully select his sardars himself and not leave the duty to his staff. Sardars who have been too long on the garden or who have been down recruiting several times previously and have worked out their connection, should not be sent down to recruit. Successful sardars receive a bonus of from R10 to R40 per adult, the average being from R10 to R20. In some cases the advances made to successful sardars are recovered from them on the garden and sometimes not. I am opposed to the payment of a large bonus to the sardar for adult recruits as it might result in his getting above himself. I have had complaints from sardars that they had not been paid the bonuses promised to them.

It is difficult to say whether the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will prejudicially affect recruitment for Assam. I do not think that Cachar and Sylhet will gain many more coolies by this step.

I fear that the repeal of the Act would lead to a revival of the arkati abuses

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I am opposed to the repeal of Sections 195 and 196. It is only the *badmashes* who want to abscond, who are as a rule contractors', and not sardari, coolies. Though as a manager I had no cause to arrest many people under these sections, I think that their existence acts as a deterrent on desertion. I do not consider, as a matter of fact, that many people would run away if the sections were done away with, but it would not be wise to publish the fact.

No. 62.—Mr. F. C. Turner, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Bilaspur.*

There were famines in this district in 1896-97 and 1899-1900, scarcity in 1902-03 and again this year. There was a decline of over 150,000 in the population in the decade preceding the last census, the numbers having gone down from 1,164,158 to 1,012,972. This was the result of the famines and of emigration. We have no accurate figures for emigration before Act VI of 1901, but it was then very considerable. There is practically no demand for labour within the district apart from agriculture; in the present year many emigrants are going to the Gondia-Chanda Railway construction and towards Calcutta, and to the surrounding districts where the crops have been good. There are sleeper-cutting operations going on in parts of the district. I know of no particular class in the district whom it would be desirable to send to Assam. The landless labourer is not found in large numbers. The village labourer is generally paid in kind. Assam stinks in the nostrils of the people, owing to the recruiting abuses under the old Act; these abuses will creep in again if the Act is abolished. Emigration will never be popular till Assam has lived down its bad name. The present system of recruiting is fairly satisfactory.

The Bilaspuri has no inherent objection to leaving his district in search of work. If a coolie likes a garden on his arrival he should be sent down as a sardar in 3 or 4 months; it is not much good to send him down in 3 or 4 years when his friends have forgotten him. I do not think that there is much objection on the part of emigrants to going for four years. The people who go to Khargpur return for the sowing in June and leave after the harvest. The Act minimum wages are more than the agricultural labourer gets here and therefore form a sufficient inducement to emigrate. In January I found men being paid 2 annas and women 6 pice as daily wages on road work under the Public Works Department. The inhabitant of this district makes no distinction between Cachar and Assam. If the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley I think that people may be smuggled away to Assam on false pretences.

Section 90 is in force in this district. I have had three cases in the last two months in which Section 90 sardars have been found not to be working on the straight. One man had taken up a batch of coolies collected from several surrounding districts, whom he could not have possibly recruited himself. I believe that these sardars were being employed merely as escorts to illegally recruited coolies. The coolies I understand were bought from unlicensed recruiters by a representative of the gardens. I shall give the Committee a note of these cases.

Written Note put in by witness on 10th March 1906.

Case No. I.

Mussammat Mungia was a sardarni and recruited three coolies for Assam; she left them by the railway station at Bilaspur while she went to buy things in the bazaar. Meanwhile two men, Bowna and Chaindas, persuaded them that they would find Mungia and took them along. This was about the 11th November 1905. They were produced on 27th November at the forwarding depot of Messrs. Logan and Leslie, and entered in the *challan* of Bihari sardar. The batch of coolies missed the train that day; and the above three coolies refused to go on the 28th as they could not find their sardarni Mungia. They were then taken away by Gulab, peon of one Hussain Khan, to the latter's house, where they were found by the police on 1st December, on information supplied by Mr. Turton, Local Agent. Chaindas, Gulab and Bowna are satellites of Hussain Khan who is strongly suspected (I might say notorious) for illegal recruiting; he has no license. The four are being prosecuted in this case under Section 164 of Act VI of 1901.

Bihari is a sardar of the Hilika tea garden, with a permit under Section 90 of the Act. He has given evidence in the prosecution, and stated that he always put up with Hussain Khan when in Bilaspur; coolies brought in by him were fed by Hussain Khan. He was supplied with money by a doctor Babu (name not given) who resided until a year ago on the Hilika tea garden.

Case No. II.

Bihari sardar with permit under Section 90 from the Hilika tea garden in the Sibsagar district took away 11 coolies on 4th November last under cover of his permit. A telegram in the name of Hussain Khan was sent to the Sub-Inspector of Police at Chakradharpur station, asking him to detain Behari with 11 coolies as they were being taken away without orders. The Sub-Inspector stopped Bihari and his coolies and produced them before the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum at Chaibassa, who sent all the coolies back to Bilaspur. All said they were unwilling to go to Assam, and were released at Bilaspur. These people had been taken away under the false pretence of finding work at Khargpur, and when the Sub-Inspector came up he found the coolies refusing to get into the Asansole train, saying that their "arkatis" told them they were to go to Khargpur, and unless they could go in the same train they would return home.

These coolies stated at Bilaspur that Chaindas had given them to Bihari sardar. Chaindas is one of Hussain Khan's satellites and is being prosecuted with Hussain Khan and others under Section 164 of Act VI of 1901 in another case (see case No. I).

The mention of the word "arkatis" by the coolies at Chakradharpur shows that the sardar did not recruit them.

Hussain Khan denied the telegram which reached the Sub-Inspector and said that he suspected one Ramnath, chuprassi of Messrs. Logan and Leslie, Forwarding Agents, who had a grudge against him. But unless Hussain Khan was making something out of the coolies, he would have lost nothing by their being stopped.

These coolies came from Kutni, Raipur district (places so far apart as Rajim and Simga), Khairagarh, Sirguja State, as well as this district. It is impossible that they could have been recruited by Bihari sardar, and their residence in places so far apart confirms the suspicion that they had been collected in Bilaspur and handed over to Bihari.

The case is being reported to the Local Government.

CASE No. III.

I ordered Mr. Burns, Extra Assistant Commissioner, to make a surprise visit to Hussain Khan's depot on the morning of the 5th instant. Amongst others were found Bharat Babu, under-manager of Lallacherra Estate, Cachar district, with four coolies, who, it was said, had been left behind as they were ill and could not go with a batch of 15 sent away with a sardar Pochai under Section 90. The following telegrams were recovered from Bharat Babu, as the Extra Assistant Commissioner had received information that certain incriminating telegrams had reached him :—

(1) "Get money from Jardine pay contractors for free coolies if more sardars required wire."

(2) "Return to garden as soon as possible tell Hussain Khan to arrange eighty good coolies."

Both telegrams were from Crawford, said to be the manager of the garden. Bharat Babu of course denies any dealing with Hussain Khan, but his denial will carry conviction to no reasonable man's mind. The sardar's permits are being cancelled and the District Magistrate, Cachar, written to.

Note.—Bharat Babu had an authority from Messrs. Jardine, Skinner & Co., and a blank form of authority from them to fill in recruiter's name and this was thought sufficient for him to work with as selecting agent (according to his statement).

10TH MARCH 1906.

No. 63.—RAMJIT PANDE, *Licensed Contractor, Bilaspur.*

I have worked for 22 or 24 years as a contractor ; under the old Act I worked as a free contractor.

From 1st October 1902 to 30th September 1903 I despatched 636 coolies.

„	„	„	1903	„	„	„	1904	„	„	316	„ „
„	„	„	1904	„	„	„	1905	„	„	138	„ „
„	„	„	1905	„	8th March		1906	„	„	141	„ „

The numbers have decreased owing to the strictness of the law ; women do not get registered under the present Act. Also old coolies who have come back from Assam give a bad account of the place, saying that it is feverish and abounds in leeches ; hence people are afraid to go. I used to work at Sambalpur before the railway opened ; very few coolies went from these parts before the railway was made. If the law is relaxed and enquiries about women abandoned, more coolies will be obtained. The wages should also be raised to R6 or R7 instead of R5 per month. Coolies go from here to the Assam Railways and Trading Company on R8 per mensem ; they go for one year to work in the coal mines. Most of the coolies I recruit go to the mines. Many coolies have returned after doing their year in the mines. I send the coolies to the mines because they are mostly single men and the gardens want women or men and women together. There are women who have left their husbands two or three years, in such cases the husband cannot be produced, but still registration is refused. Coolies who go to Assam wish to return after putting in their time there. Two annas is the usual rate of wages here. I pay the recruiter the price I receive for a coolie, deducting R23. I get R55, R60 or R65 for a coolie for a one-year agreement for the coal mines. I get R60 to R75 for a tea garden coolie ; sometimes I have received R80. If there is a scarcity there will be many emigrants. Chamars are not popular with garden managers, but some are taken.

No. 64.—BABU J. N. MITRA, *Licensed Contractor, Bilaspur.*

I have worked here for two years; I have sent off 150 coolies in this period. The severity of the law makes it difficult to get coolies. A husband who has abandoned his wife will not come forward as a witness; he will not take the trouble or fears that the woman may be handed over to him. Single men are taken for the coal mines; and after registration if a coolie is not selected as fit for the mines I have to let him go, as the gardens will not take a man without a woman. I could get more emigrants if recruiters' coolies were treated like sardari coolies, *viz.*, registered and put on contract on the same day and sent off without evidence of their relationship. Men in the employ of Asansole and Khargpur contractors come here and convey coolies from the district secretly ; they buy them off my arkatis, as the price is higher at Asansole and Khargpur. It is convenient to get rid of a single woman in this way.

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No. 65.—Mr. Krishnaji Anant Shirole, *Extra Assistant Commissioner, Bilaspur.*

I am Registering Officer at Bilaspur. The number of labourers registered have been as under in the last 5 years :—

Year.	Chapter III.	Chapter IV.	Section 90.	Total.
1901-02	157	1,422	...	1,579
1902-03	385	1,944	...	2,329
1903-04	195	443	11	649
1904-05	80	388	25	493
1905—1st March 1906	113	673	328	1,114

There are more people going this year as there is scarcity in a considerable portion of the district.

The reasons which keep people from emigrating to Assam are :—

(1) Ignorance of the country. Even intelligent people have many absurd notions about Assam. There are stories of witchcraft, etc., which are believed in.

(2) Unhealthiness of the climate.

(3) Permanent transportation of the emigrants. One hardly ever hears of any one returning from Assam.

(4) Inadequate wages on the gardens.

(5) Illegal and fraudulent practices in recruitment.

(6) Harsh treatment of labourers. It is generally said that even when they are sick, people have to turn out to work. Labourers who want to run away are caught and brought back and made to work.

I formerly served in Bilaspur from 1894 to 1899. There was recruiting on a large scale at that time, and many people were decoyed away from their homes. The malpractices which then existed frightened people and gave Assam a bad name which still sticks to it. There are still abuses ; people are enticed away without the knowledge of their relations. Both recruiters and garden sardars practice such deceptions, but the chief offenders are the contractors' recruiters. Sardars generally try to take away their own relations and friends so as to have them with them on the garden. But if a sardar has no connections to bring away, he tries to get single people and then has recourse to crooked devices in order to obtain them. There have been over 300 Section 90 sardars working in the district this year. There have been two or three complaints of improper recruitment by such sardars, which are under enquiry.

There is still a field for recruitment in Bilaspur. With two or three exceptions the last ten years have been bad and the lower classes have suffered much. Any number of people go to the Bengal coal fields and the railway works taking their families with them. Most of them go for one season, returning for the sowing. If emigration to Assam were temporary like this, very many people would go. The average wage of a day labourer is from 8 to 10 pice for a man and 6 to 7 pice for a woman. They say they can always get 4 annas at Khargpur on the railway works. Even the wage here is about ₹5 per month, as most people work every day. I do not think Assam can get labour from here unless the rate of wages is raised. People will not go so far away unless they can better themselves and make substantially more than they can earn at home. It is not generally known that coolies on the gardens can make extra money by overtime. All they know is that they are to get ₹5. It is not much use explaining to the ordinary emigrant the conditions of his employment in Assam. To everything said to him, he replies, "*Khushi se jata hai,*" and he seems to think that this is all he has to answer, when put before the registering officer. I believe a rupee added to the wage would be an attraction to begin with.

In my opinion the four years' contract is also a deterrent. The people like the Khargpur work, from which they can return when they like, and the fact that they cannot so return from Assam is distasteful. I think that repatriation at the end of the contract term would be a very good plan. People would not be lost to their relations as they are at present. They would come back and give a good account of their life on the gardens, if they had been well-treated there. I think that many such people would voluntarily return to Assam with their friends, if they found the life agreeable. The sardar does not fulfil this object ; he is sent down for the purpose of recruiting and he is supposed to give exaggerated accounts of what he has seen there and people are not very ready to believe him, as they think he is speaking with a purpose.

I would prefer to see all contractors' recruiting done away with. I would have all recruitment done through garden sardars. I would make registration compulsory. Section 90 can, as we have recently been finding out, be worked so as to differ not at all from recruitment by contractors, and I think it should be controlled.

I am strongly against the withdrawal of the Act from the recruiting districts. The tea gardens will still be badly off for labour, and the planters will have to use some means of getting the workers they require. This would simply lead to the decoying away of people from the recruiting districts and the old abuses would arise. The coolie would still fetch a price

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down here and this would make it worth while taking him away by unfair means. The village people are far too ignorant to make a contract for themselves and will still require protection.

No one here knows any difference between Cachar and Sylhet and Assam. I think that there will be difficulties in the recruiting districts if recruitment is free for one part of the labour districts and under the Act for the remainder. People will be taken away nominally for Cachar and Sylhet and sent to Assam. The coolie knows nothing about where he is going and will agree to go to one set of tea-gardens as readily as to another.

There is recruitment for the Colonies in this district. The very same kind of abuses exist in connection with it as with Assam recruitment. Only yesterday a report was received from a Colony of a man having been taken there, regarding whom all the particulars given were false, name and address and everything.

No. 66.—NANAK CHAND, *Trader and Contractor, Bilaspur.*

I have lived in this district for about 17 years. I have no difficulty in obtaining labour for local works, on roads, buildings, etc. I pay men 2 annas and women 1½ annas per diem. The rate for earth work is R3-4 to R3-12 per 1,000 cubic feet. The emigration of labourers to Khargpur and Calcutta began about five years ago. They can earn 4 annas daily there. The people prefer earth work. Labourers of all castes go, some with and some without their wives and families. They do not go much to Assam because it is far distant and they fear the climate and leeches. A great many labourers from this and other districts of the Central Provinces went to work on the Assam-Bengal Railway. They came back again, but many died there, so people fear Assam. If labour in Assam were free and if people could come and go as they please, many would emigrate to that Province. They are afraid of the contract. People went in hundreds to the Gondia-Jubbulpore Railway, but when they got there they came back again as they found the rates were not good enough. The present system of recruiting for Assam benefits the arkati only and not the coolie. People do not like the system of recruitment in force and complain of their relatives being taken away, and once registered they cannot get them back.

No. 67.—BISAL SINGH, *Malguzar, Akaltara, Bilaspur District.*

Numbers of people go from my part of the district to Assam. They do not know what they are going for nor what the country is like. The persons who take them away give all manner of specious accounts of what they will get and deceive them into going. People go spontaneously to Khargpur and Calcutta for railway and other works. This Khargpur emigration only began about five years ago. Emigration to Assam is quite different, no one goes there unless he is enticed. Intending emigrants to Assam are told that they will get R10 or R12 per month, wear fine clothes like the recruiters, work 2 or 3 hours a day and have the rest of the day to themselves. For the Assam-Bengal Railway a number of people were recruited. They were pleased with the work and the pay, but gave a bad account of the climate when they returned. Except sardars, emigrants do not come back from Assam. People strongly object to not being allowed to change their minds after they have been registered. If there were no agreement and they could make their own terms and come back when they please, many persons would go freely to Assam. I think the offer of R8 per month would lead many people to go there. If labourers were allowed to come and go as they pleased, they would not be misled by arkatis as they now are. People in this district are so ignorant that they cannot even tell which *hákim* it is who has come to a village. If recruitment for Assam is carried on much longer on the present system, it will be difficult to get anyone to go to Assam.

JUBBULPORE, 12TH MARCH 1906.

Jubbulpore.

No. 68.—MR. A. WRIXON, *Local Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Jubbulpore.*

I have been connected with recruiting for Assam since 1893. I have been for six years local agent of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. I have the Seoni, Mandla, Saugor and Damoh districts under me as well as Jubbulpore and also look after the Hoshangabad and Nimar districts. From the Jubbulpore centre 658 adult labourers were sent to Assam in 1903-04, 1,449 in 1904-05, and 1,356 this year up to date. These figures include a large proportion from the Central India Native States, in fact more than half the emigrants are from these States. The reason why recruitment is brisk in the States this year is, I believe, because there is scarcity in Central India. Very little recruiting is done in the Nerbudda Division. Practically nothing is done in Nimar. At one time a fair number of people went forward from the latter district, but hardly any are forthcoming now.

Emigration to Assam is not popular with the people of these parts. The chief reason for this is the stories that are in circulation about the unhealthiness of Assam, its leeches, and the things that are supposed to be done to the coolies on the gardens. By the latter I refer to absurd tales about coolies being boiled down for oil, etc. I think that these stories are believed

Jubbulpore. in by the villagers. Most of them are spread about by absconders, also by landowners who do not want the people to go forward. There is also the fact that very few people come back from Assam, as compared with the numbers who go. I would also say that the abuses which at one time were connected with recruitment for Assam have left an impression unfavourable to Assam. This has been to a great extent counteracted by registration under the new Act, and this impression is beginning to wear off.

In Jubbulpore I send on nearly all the sardari emigrants without being put on contract. I do not know whether they are put on contract in Assam. The gardens have asked me to send up the coolies without a contract; for only one garden am I at present putting them under contract. But the emigrant is told by the sardar that he is going for four years, and he makes no objection to this. I have only on two occasions ever found an emigrant who raised any question about the four years' term, and thousands of people have passed through my hands. Nothing is known amongst the people down here about the right of private arrest conferred upon employers on the gardens.

I think that it would be a good plan to allow labourers who have served out their contract terms to return to their own country. If they had had a good time in Assam, they would probably want to return there and would give people down here a true version of their experiences.

Wages have risen greatly in recent years in Jubbulpore. The building of the Gun Carriage Factory, the construction of other military buildings, the Brick and Pottery works are all attracting labour. Mining enterprise is also making a beginning. The consequence is that a male coolie can now get from 4 to 6 annas and a female 3 annas. This is about double what used to be given 3 or 4 years ago. All these works are still complaining of shortness of labour. The people whom we get for Assam from the Native States are nearly all of the very poorest, but that is not the case so much in the British districts. The sardar takes away his friends and relations; they prefer going with him, as the work they will have in Assam is more of the nature they are accustomed to, *viz.*, working on the land. I believe that by working overtime the labourer on the garden can earn much more than the statutory wage. If that is the case, I should say there is no reason for altering the present wage on the gardens; the emigrant gets in addition housing and free medical attendance, all of which should be counted in. I would not be in favour of paying an intending emigrant a bonus to get him to go to Assam. I think it would only lead to people taking the money and then absconding. There are a very few cases in which I have paid the debts of emigrants. I do not think any such system would work; every man would have a debt to be paid off, and it would simply be a waste of money.

I think there is still labour to be got from the Jubbulpore district, although it has been much worked over. The population has gone down largely owing to famine and plague, but there are still people to be got. I get very few emigrants from Mandla and Seoni. I do not know whether there is any field for recruitment there; the coolies who come from these districts are amongst the best we get.

Section 90 is in force in the districts of the Jubbulpore Division. I do not think that recruitment under this section is more successful than ordinary sardari recruiting. I would keep registration; I do not think it frightens emigrants. It gives them confidence and is also a protection to the sardar as well against interference by the police. I have worked as a contractor myself, and I would not advocate the abolition of that system. The contractor is the pioneer of the business and opens out fresh districts. Without him the supply of labour by the sardari system would in my opinion be insufficient.

If the Act were altogether withdrawn the same abuses would arise as were formerly rife. The price of labour would not necessarily fall. It is true that the coolie would run away from the garden, but that he can do at present. He can be arrested now, but that does not mean that you can catch a man who wants to get off. Without combination on the part of the employers, the price of the coolie will still be substantial, and if the planter has to buy his coolie, he will find the arkati ready to his hand. The mere repeal of the Act will not induce labour to go to Assam, for, as I have said, I do not think that the contract and the right of private arrest on the gardens make any difference to recruitment. Labour will still be difficult to obtain, and without the control of the Act you will have all the old abuses over again.

Since this year, I have paid a bonus to the sardars of some gardens for people brought in by them. The sum ordinarily paid is from R3 to R10. I do not think there is any risk of sardars taking to crooked recruitment on account of the inducement thus offered.

When the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, there will be two systems of recruitment side by side, and I do not know how this can be worked. Emigrants will want to go up under the free system, and no body will be willing to go to Assam. People here know no difference between the Assam Valley and Sylhet and Cachar. I have said that the four years' contract is not a deterrent to emigration at present, but that is because there is no other system in force. Once start a system of free labour, and people will get to know the difference and they will not go for four years. There would also be a danger of contractors engaging coolies nominally for the Surma Valley and getting them to change their minds once they had got them to a distance from their homes.

I believe that some of the Native Chiefs do not view with favour the recruitment that goes on in their States. The castes we chiefly get are Kols from Rewa and Gonds from Bhopal. **Jubbulpore.**

No. 69.—JEHANGIR KHAN, *Licensed Contractor, Jubbulpore.*

I have been working as a contractor for the last 12 years. I am getting fewer coolies now than formerly, as famines and plague carried off many people and a great number of persons emigrated during the famine years. Last year I despatched 560 souls to Assam, of whom 349 were adult men, 142 adult women, and 69 dependants. From 1895 to 1900 I used to send up many more emigrants. There are plenty of people in the district who might be got for Assam. The pay offered there is, however, too small. If men were paid R10 and women R8 many persons would go. At present only the very poor and people who have no resources left emigrate to Assam, but those who have an income here of R8 or R10 per month would never think of going. The police and malguzars spread bad accounts of Assam. They tell the people that leeches are very bad there and a common story is that oil is extracted from the bodies of coolies; the latter are also told that they are going there for life and that they will never return. If labourers were only allowed to return at the expiry of their contracts, people would gain confidence; as it is, very few come back. Deserters also spread stories that deductions are made from their small earnings if their work is short. I have heard from returned labourers that the hoeing tasks on the gardens—20 to 25 *nals* of 12 feet—are excessive. People do not like the four years' contract. It would be much better if the term were reduced to one year, the same as that employed by the Assam Railways and Trading Company for coolies recruited for their coal mines. I have sent up labourers to the Assam coal mines. They were promised R8 per man, R7 per woman, payment for overtime, and a free passage back at the end of a year. Some of the coolies returned at the end of the year and others stayed on for another year on receipt of a bonus of R20.

People of this district do not fear registration; I am myself much in favour of it as it prevents abuses. If the Act were abolished, abuses would arise again, and it would be bad for the labourer both here and in Assam. If the Act were repealed, there would still be competition for labour in Assam, and managers would continue to pay a high commission for coolies.

I receive from R70 to R105 per head for coolies despatched from Goalundo, out of which I pay the recruiters from R40 to R60. Only intelligent people are taken for the Colonies and recruiters have orders only to send people of this class; the Assam planter likes the *jungli* man, who is generally extremely ignorant. He also stands the climate better. The Colonies take people of all castes, but the medical examination is very strict. For persons recruited for the Colonies contractors are paid R35 per man and R40 per woman, exclusive of way expenses, food, registration and medical charges, and the bonus to the agent. I have at different times recruited both for the Colonies and Assam. People are much more ready to go to the Colonies, because of the good prospects offered, but it is very uphill work recruiting for Assam.

The offer of land would attract more emigrants to Assam, but the most important thing of all is that labourers there should not be induced to enter into a second agreement. I say this because coolies who take fresh agreements do not return to this country and therefore contribute to the bad name of Assam, and also because the system prevents the settlement of time-expired labourers on waste lands and consequently retards the extension of cultivation.

When the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, the Assam Valley will get fewer coolies, and will have to pay more for them. Abuses will arise again, as people will be enticed away and it will not be possible to make enquiries concerning them. I now send a few labourers to Cachar and Sylhet.

One difficulty in connection with contractors' recruitment, which I should like to bring forward, is this: a contractor is given a license for all the districts of a Division, but he is required to register emigrants in the particular districts in which they are recruited. This gives much trouble, as it practically means that the contractor has to keep a sub-agency in each district, even though the number of persons coming forward is very small. Difficulty is also experienced in the case of single women who are *bonâ fide* desirous of going to Assam, as it is frequently impossible to obtain a witness to comply with the requirements of Section 34 (4) of the Act. I would recommend that this provision of the law should be relaxed and put on the same footing as the Colonial Act. Under the latter a single woman is detained for 10 days by the registering officer, and if no one comes forward to claim her within that period, she is allowed to go.

The wages of unskilled labour have risen greatly of late years in the Jubbulpore district. A man now gets from 4 to 5 annas and a woman 3 to 3½ annas, and notwithstanding this there is a general complaint of difficulty in obtaining labour. It is on this account that I consider that Assam must raise its rates before it can expect to successfully compete in the labour market.

No. 70.—MR. R. B. SHEORE, *Extra Assistant Commissioner, Jubbulpore.*

I was two years at Balaghat, for 18 months of which I was Registering Officer. I have been nearly two years in Jubbulpore. There used to be a good deal of emigration from

Jubbulpore. Balaghat, mostly Gonds. The Gonds there are fairly well off; they are mostly agricultural and day labourers. Three years ago they used to earn 2½ to 3 annas a day. The women also work and used to earn 6 pice to 2 annas. When I was in the district they used not to leave the district in search of work because a number of grant-in-aid tanks were under construction. Balaghat is a rice producing district and this crop employs a good deal of labour for weeding and transplanting. Emigration to Assam was never popular in Balaghat, mainly because people do not like to leave their country except in dire necessity. We have a proverb that half a loaf at home is better than a whole loaf abroad. The terms offered for Assam labour are not very attractive; the people are, it is true, well looked after in the depots. People have an idea that Assam is unhealthy and that labourers have to work up to their waist in water and die off in six months. If coolies came back from Assam and gave a good account of the place, emigration would be more popular. I have been making enquiries in the Jubbulpore district during the last month and I have not come across a single man who has returned from Assam, except garden sardars. The general belief is that coolies who go to Assam either die there or are compelled to remain. The labourers also do not like payment by task; it was unpopular even on famine work. The prevalent system here is one of petty contract; the labourer then takes his own time over the work.

But even if confidence as to Assam conditions prevailed, the present terms are not sufficiently attractive to induce people to leave their own country. I think that R8 for a man and R6 for a woman is necessary. In this district a permanent farm servant makes on an average R5 a month in cash and kind. I do not think that the four years' contract deters people; the real fact is that there is no necessity for them to emigrate. If immigrants did not come into Jubbulpore to help with the wheat harvest in the Nerbudda Valley portion of the district, the crops could not be reaped, which shows that there is no surplus population. I understand that fraud and misrepresentation in connection with recruitment still go on. I had a case two months ago against a garden sardar in which he had misdescribed a girl who was actually married.

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No. 71.—MR. C. W. E. MONTGOMERIE, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Hoshangabad.*

I was Deputy Commissioner of Bilaspur from 1901 to 1905 and am at present Deputy Commissioner of Hoshangabad. There is practically no recruitment for Assam from the Hoshangabad district. I was formerly Settlement Officer of the Nimar and Chhindwara districts. There is no prospect of emigration from the Hoshangabad district in my opinion. Labour is at present in great demand for railway work and ginning factories. The revival of agriculture after the recent bad seasons is also absorbing labour, and as the wages are good people will not move outside the district. The wages of an ordinary day-labourer used to be 2½ annas. It is now difficult in any part of the district to get a man to work for under 3 annas. In trade centres and at the factories wages are still higher. In Hoshangabad they are about 4 annas a day for a man. These wages may go down when the railway work is finished, but that remains to be seen.

In Nimar there has always been a scarcity of labour. The boom in the cotton industry has used up all the labour available. There are also projects for throwing open the extensive waste lands in the district to cultivation, which will still further increase the demand for labour. The Korku will be much sought after for opening up these waste areas, and as he is fever-proof, he will find the work congenial and will not want to leave his native place. I should say there is very little chance of getting emigrants from Nimar for Assam.

The southern part of Chhindwara is practically part of the Nagpur country, and has profited by the great advance in cotton cultivation, which has brought about increased employment for the labouring classes on good wages. The northern plateau of the district has just been opened up by the railway, and the new coal mines will probably take all the labour there is to be got, especially the Gonds. In the extreme north there are considerable areas of waste land and the pressure on the soil is very slight. I do not think that there is a field for emigration in any part of the district.

I am chiefly acquainted with recruitment in Bilaspur. Ordinarily I do not consider that people would go to Assam unless they have personal reasons for leaving their homes or unless they are hard pressed in a time of scarcity. In a fairly normal year only the first class will go to Assam as a rule, that is men who want to leave their families, or women who want to get away from their husbands, or people who are in trouble with their fellow villagers or the police. There is a very large temporary emigration from Bilaspur towards the Bengal side. People are very willing to go away between harvest and sowing time for good wages. This is quite a different style of emigration from that for Assam. The Assam Railways and Trading Company used to get a very good stamp of coolie on R8 for a man, R7 for a woman, on a one year's contract for their coal mines. These people were quite above the standard of the tea garden emigrant. I do not think people came forward very readily for this work, but I used to be struck with the good physique of the batches sent up.

I do not think that there is any very great dislike among the people of Bilaspur to Assam. The place is now getting better known, but there is still a prejudice against going

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so very far away for so long a time. The old malpractices must still, I should say, be remembered by the people, and that is also to some extent against people going to Assam. But the protection of the new Act has done much to counteract this. Landowners are opposed to emigration, partly because they lose their tenants and partly because they still look askance at recruiting; the idea survives that recruiting methods are underhand and should be discouraged.

The supply of labourers in the Bilaspur district is now just about what is wanted in ordinary years. The population decreased very considerably in the famines. It is now rising rapidly, but it will take many years before the new generation grows up and before there is a surplus. Assam conditions remaining as they are at present, I do not consider that there is much possibility of extended emigration from Bilaspur.

The emigration which appeals to the people is the annual movement to Bengal. The cost of the long journey to Assam prevents it from participating in this movement. If Assam therefore wants emigration of a less temporary nature, it must make the conditions of employment attractive. I should say that Assam would have to give R2 per month more than it does now to attract the labour it requires. It would also be quite worth giving trial to a shorter contract, something on the lines of the Assam Railways and Trading Company's recruitment. The main thing is to give the people who are left at home confidence regarding the persons who have gone away. This can be brought about if there is regular going and coming between the recruiting and labour districts. Repatriation at the end of the contract, if the four years' term is kept, would also have a similar effect. Let the garden pay the return fare of time-expired coolies. Many of them would go back to Assam if they had been well done on the gardens, and this would popularise recruiting amongst the people in their districts.

There are men in Bilaspur who organize labour for Khargpur and it might be possible for gardens to get labour, especially for short terms, through such men. Some of them take their own coolies to Khargpur and supervise their work. It would be a question of ordinary business negotiation whether the gardens could fall in with the terms such men would want.

There is no doubt that amongst many Government officers there is no inclination to encourage emigration to Assam. There is the idea that the labourer is better off in his own district. If this prejudice were got over, it would have a good effect. This might be obtained if representatives of the Tea industry made a point of interviewing officials in the recruiting districts and explaining misunderstood points.

If a clean sweep is made of the whole Act, you will have abuses over again. Labour would still not go forward to Assam. For a time there might be more labourers got, but emigration would again become unpopular because of abuses, and the supply would eventually fall off. I do not think that in the long run Assam would be any better off. I think an Act is absolutely necessary for the control of recruitment.

I had very little experience of Section 90 recruitment in Bilaspur. The gardens had not begun to take advantage of the provisions up to the beginning of 1905 when I left the district. Section 90 gives you as free a system of recruitment as you can well have. I think it will want very careful supervision. Worked through a reliable local agent, I should be prepared to allow it every facility, but it throws a responsibility on the local agent which he must thoroughly realise if the system is to prove a success. I do not see that contractors can be done away with; you must keep them for wholesome competition.

I am of opinion that it will be difficult to work two systems side by side, *viz.*, free recruitment for the Surma Valley and Act recruitment for Assam. The people have no idea of the distinction between the two Valleys. If the Surma Valley works through contractors, there are certain to be abuses. There will be no supervision over the contractors, who will certainly practise their old ways of deception. If the Surma Valley will confine itself to working only through sardars, I think things might go on all right. But the unlicensed contractor will be a distinct difficulty, if he is allowed to come in.

No. 72.—Mr. P. M. Greany, *Extra Assistant Commissioner, Jubbulpore.*

I have been in Jubbulpore for about 5 years.

The general impression is that when a man goes to Assam, he disappears for ever, and consequently people look on emigration to that province as a sentence of penal servitude. The reason for this is that people who go to Assam are never heard of again, and it is the impression that they either die or are kept there against their will. I do not consider that Sections 195 and 196 contribute to this impression, and in my opinion those sections are necessary. People think that the fresh contracts, entered into by coolies on the expiry of their original agreements, are not executed voluntarily but are forced upon the labourers. I am of opinion that it would be beneficial if statements were published showing the number of coolies who return to their homes on the expiry of their contracts, and the amounts they earned. I have also heard from malguzars and contractors that the wages paid in Assam are insufficient. It has been asserted that the tasks demanded from coolies can be easily finished if they begin work at 7 A. M. and leave off at 11 A. M. Malguzars and contractors,

Jubbulpore. however, say that the tasks are really very heavy and cannot be completed in this time. People ask how it is that, if labourers can earn overtime pay, so little money is remitted to their homes.

Some malguzars will not allow recruiters to go to their villages, and I think that if a better class of men were employed by contractors as recruiters there would be less opposition on the part of the malguzars, whose objections are as a rule more to the type of recruiter employed than to recruitment itself for Assam. I would place sardars under the same restrictions as regards the recruitment of single women as contractors are required to submit to. I am in favour of sardari recruiting, but not of the way it is sometimes carried on under Section 90; what I mean is that sometimes sardars remove coolies recruited under Section 90 from the district before sending in the nominal roll. I am of opinion that the specially empowered garden sardar should be under some control. He should report his arrival to the Sub-divisional Officer or the Tahsildar, so that the local officer may know that he is at work, and may be able to deal with any complaints received regarding him. I do not think that sardars are properly selected; they have sometimes only been in the garden for six months; my idea of a garden sardar is a man who has been on the garden for several years and whom the planter can trust. The sardar should be a man of some position and respectability.

I would only have one contractor for each district. At present there are several in Jubbulpore. The result is that A tries to get hold of B's coolies and tells them that they are being sent to a very bad garden. This sort of thing traduces Assam and is injurious to emigration.

I do not think that the four years' contract deters people, but repatriation after its expiry would popularise emigration. The expenses of repatriation might be met from a fund formed by a small compulsory deduction from the coolies' wages together with contributions from the tea garden. To grant labourers land would simply be to colonise Assam at the expense of the planter. Wages in Assam are insufficient in comparison with what people can earn at home. Ten years ago coolies could be obtained locally for 2½ annas per man and 1 to 1½ annas per woman, whereas men now get from 4½ to 5 annas and women from 2½ to 3 annas. I would recommend that the various tasks to be performed should be stated in the contract, in order that the labourer may know what he can earn, and the fact that overtime pay can be earned should also be mentioned in the contract.

The planters themselves are responsible for the present high cost of labour because they compete instead of combining to keep prices down.

When there are two systems of recruitment in force side by side, *i. e.*, under the Act for the Upper Assam Valley, and free for the Surma Valley, I do not see how it will be possible to prevent abuses. There will be no control over recruitment for the Surma Valley, and people will disappear of whom no trace will be left.

No. 73.—Rao Bahadur Behari Lal Khazanchi, *Malguzar, Jubbulpore.*

I do not think that people go from this district to Assam willingly, by that I mean that they do not go thoroughly understanding that the real conditions will be for their own profit. They are given promises of all kinds and *phuslaoed* into going. They are brought to headquarters and treated liberally in the matter of food and drink, and given to understand that they will be similarly treated in Assam. I do not think there are many people in this district who want to be provided with a living elsewhere. There is plenty of work for them here. For instance the *rabi* harvest is now beginning, and thousands of people have to come in from Rewa and the surrounding country in order to get the crops cut. The rate of wages has also risen greatly. In the villages men get 1½ to 2 annas, although at harvest time their earnings are equal to 4 annas at least. In the city it is impossible to get labourers even on 4 annas at any time, the demand is so great. If many people were to leave the district for Assam it would be a serious matter for the cultivators, as the local supply of labour would be very short. I would not object to people going to Assam if they bettered themselves substantially there. But one never sees anybody coming back from Assam, and no one knows what becomes of them there. I have never heard that people are so well off in Assam that they do not want to come back. I think it would be a good thing if they returned and let people know how they have got on in Assam.

No. 74.—Mr. R. A. B. Chapman, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Seoni.*

I have been Deputy Commissioner of Seoni for the last 16 months. I was three years in Sambalpur, from 1894 to 1897. There is now very little emigration from Seoni as far as I know, but Seoni emigrants are registered at Jubbulpore. Assam is looked on as the poor-house is at home; people go there when driven by distress, or when they have some family or personal reason for leaving their homes. There is no surplus population looking for labour in Seoni now, as a new railway has just been completed and new forms of employment are being developed. A labourer can make from 3 to 4 annas a day at the trade centres in the district. Agricultural labourers are paid in kind and the value of their wages has increased with the rise

in prices. Ginning factories and hemp presses are being started, and the development of trade gives employment to large numbers of carters. The Gondia-Chanda and Chhindwara railways now under construction are also giving employment. Large irrigation works are being constructed in the small rice tract, the condition of which has been precarious. Without severe scarcity there is little chance of extensive emigration to Assam, or unless more attractive terms are offered. **Jubbulpore.**

I think a considerable prejudice still exists against Assam arising from the abuses connected with recruiting under Act I of 1882. When I was in Sambalpur families used to sleep roped together to avoid being kidnapped by recruiters; and there were several cases of unwilling recruits jumping out of trains. The mass of the people, however, probably know better now what emigration to Assam means; but there is a considerable percentage of the young and ignorant who fall a ready prey to the unscrupulous recruiter.

I would retain the penal contract for four years but allow the coolie to redeem it by a payment of three months' wages; it is not fair that a man going to a new country should be absolutely bound. At any rate unless the contract is made more elastic, labour will not be attracted.

The wages must be raised to a limit which will enable the coolie to save and send money home freely. The extra expense would probably be largely made up by better work. The wages should be comparable with those offered by Natal. If you want a staple supply of labour you must pay heavily for it.

If the Act were abolished, I think all the old abuses would arise again. If the Act is abolished only for Cachar, I think that there would be a fight between the two sets of recruiters, in which the Assam recruiter would suffer.

Native opinion considers it unfair that a coolie after registration and before he has executed a contract should be liable to imprisonment for failing to execute the contract.

I do not see how the contractor can be dispensed with; but it is desirable to eliminate him as far as possible, as the licensed recruiter is much worse than the garden sardar.

Section 90 does not appear to be used in Seoni; there has only been one Section 90 sardar sent there. I can therefore give no opinion as regards the working of the section.

If garden sardars were empowered to pay a substantial bonus to the intending emigrant they would probably be more successful in recruiting. Payment of a bonus, say R50, would probably be more attractive, and at the same time cheaper to the employer, than a rise in wages. Repatriation at the end of the contract would also be popular.

I have no suggestion to make as to how the Gandas of Sambalpur could be recruited in large numbers.

14TH MARCH 1906.

No. 75.—MR. A. C. F. BLENNERHESSETT, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Jubbulpore.*

I have been in the Jubbulpore district as Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner off and on since 1899. In the last three years the number of emigrants have been as follows:—

Year.	Chapter III.	Chapter IV.	Section 90.	Total.
1902-03	...	251	...	251
1903-04	128	168	190	486
1904-05	180	347	158	685

These figures include emigrants under Chapters III and IV from the districts of Seoni and Mandla, who are registered or put under contract here. In 1903-04 there were 37 especially empowered sardars under Section 90 and in 1904-05, 58. In the present year 45 such sardars have come down. There are now five licensed contractors in the district, but two of them have not yet started work.

People are not generally ready to go to Assam from this district. But I think the prejudices against Assam are decreasing, otherwise it is difficult to account for the rise in the number of emigrants in the last few years. In the present season also I believe recruiting has been fairly brisk, and this notwithstanding that the crops are good and the local demand for labour keen and wages high. The people who are usually got for Assam are agricultural labourers out of employ. I do not think the poorer tenants ever go. There is no large class of labourers here who can be drawn on for Assam. There is no surplus population which would offer a ready field for recruitment. There is a great demand for labour at this time of the year for the wheat harvest. So far as I know the supply is generally sufficient as extensive temporary immigration goes on. This takes place every year.

The prices of wages have risen very greatly in the last few years. The daily wage in the villages has risen from 2 to 2½ annas for men and from 6 to 7 pice for females. At harvest the agricultural labourer's wage is still higher. Farm servants now get the equivalent of about R5 per month as against R3 some 5 years ago. In Jubbulpore town the wages have gone as high as 5 annas as a maximum for a man and 3 annas for a woman, and the supply

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is still insufficient. The wages of domestic service have also risen. The commonest syce cannot be got for less than R7 and he frequently gets R8.

In the absence of special circumstances in the recruiting districts, such as famine, I do not see that Assam can get labour from this district in any quantity unless it makes the conditions of service on the gardens really attractive. Wages must be offered which are appreciably higher than the wages the labourer can get here. And it must be thoroughly understood here that these attractions are obtainable. At present the emigrant does not know clearly that he can earn extra money by overtime—there is nothing said about it in the contract,—and I understand that though overtime is earned the wages actually paid are really less than the statutory wage on the average. I think that a better plan would be to let the emigrant know what his daily wage is, and also tell him that for overtime he can earn extra money. I certainly consider that there is much misconception at present about the wage. Not only the emigrant, but officials and others, are under the impression that the present wage is a monthly wage, which the coolie will get for daily attendance and ordinary diligence.

I would favour the introduction of a shorter period of contract. The labourer of these parts does not go far afield for work. He is deterred by the length of the present contract in Assam. I would put all labourers to begin with on a one-year contract. A man who liked Assam would stay on and might renew for three years. But a man who wanted to come back at the end of the year should be allowed to do so. This would certainly make emigration more popular down here. At present the general remark is that no one comes back from Assam, and that produces a bad impression. I do not consider that the return of a large number of one year time-expired labourers would give Assam a bad name. It would, I think, restore confidence among the people in the recruiting districts. There would, I admit, be a difficulty about the one-year man paying his way home. It might be arranged that any increase in wages—and I have already said that some increase is absolutely necessary if labour is to be got for Assam—should be given in the shape of deferred pay at the end of the year. Without greater freedom in the way of getting back from Assam I am of opinion that you will never get labour readily. Let the emigrant have a look round in Assam and if he likes the place put him under contract as much as you like, but do not do so until he knows what the conditions up there are. I would prefer the suggestion I have already made to giving an emigrant a bonus on recruitment. It would in the end have a better effect. What has to be aimed at is a free flow of labour, and until you provide the means of an emigrant getting back from Assam you cannot get such a flow. If a man is a free agent after his first year, it will go some way to removing the ill repute which now attaches to Assam.

The withdrawal of the Act will certainly bring up the old abuses. I believe that the present Act has been fairly successful in putting down abuses, and persons engaged in recruiting acknowledge that they work more freely and with less interference from the police than formerly. Even they, I believe, would prefer the Act to remain. From old reports in my office I find that contractors had begun to come under Act I of 1882, in order to avoid continual prosecutions under the Indian Penal Code. As soon as they began to work under the Act, cases of kidnapping and wrongful confinement dropped.

When the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, I think that Upper Assam will have a bad time. People will look askance on Upper Assam with its penal contract and will not be prepared to go there. Unless the magistrate in the recruiting district gets some certificate with the person who is recruiting for the Surma Valley, I do not see how abuses can be prevented. All the old arkatis would be out again and complaints will be rife. The good that has been done in the past 4 or 5 years in purifying recruitment will be swept away, and I should not be at all certain that it will be for the ultimate benefit of the Surma Valley to have its labour recruited free of all control.

I consider that at present the contractor is not of very much use. He does not explore the field. He has to pay for his recruiters' licenses and can only keep a certain number, who hang about head-quarters and other centres. He has to register his coolies in the district of recruitment, which means his keeping sub-agencies in the different districts, which he does not trouble to do. I believe the contractor is necessary to obtain labour for new gardens, but for all he does otherwise, I think he might be done away with. A more extensive use of Section 90 would be unobjectionable and would cover the ground more than is done at present. I have no reason to believe that the emigrant is afraid of registration. I am not sure but that the production of the coolie before the magistrate is not made use of by the recruiter to keep the coolie straight when he gets to the depot. The depot and the magistrate's court are probably held before the emigrant as being part of the same concern. I think that Section 90 should be worked only through a local agent. Unless there is some one to certify for the conduct of the sardars, you should have registration.

There is not the same dislike to going to the Colonies as there is to Assam. I cannot say what the reason is. Possibly there is an impression that the emigrant makes more money in the Colonies. I have never myself heard of cases of fraud and misrepresentation in connection with Colonial recruitment. There does not appear to be any stigma attaching to emigration to the Colonies as there still undoubtedly is to Assam.

Jubbulpore.

No. 76.—Mr. G. H. Cook, *Manager, Lime Works, Kutni, Jubbulpore District.*

I am Manager of Lime Works at Kutni. We employ about 700 labourers a day, and about 2,000 are employed on all the works together. Most of the labour comes from Rewah and it is difficult to get a sufficient supply. A man gets 2½, and a woman 2 annas, on daily labour. Working on contract a man can earn 4 annas and a woman 3 annas. About half the work is done on contract. I think that labour is not likely to be had for Assam except in famine years. Agriculturists prefer to work in their own villages in ordinary seasons. There is sufficient employment in the villages. Recruiting for Assam goes on in the neighbourhood of Kutni, but people do not emigrate unless they are hard up. If Assam wants labour it must increase the wages considerably. People would go from the United Provinces for the present statutory wage. Rupees 8 a month would attract labour from here but nothing less. We put our labourers under no agreement; they take advances weekly. If a coolie bolts with an advance we can do nothing but send a chuprassi after him. It would be useless to sue a coolie. I do not think the people who go to Assam know much or care much about the four-year contract. If we are short of labour we send out a chuprassi round the villages to let the people know that they are wanted. Our chuprassis are interfered with by the police on the pretext that they are recruiting for Assam. I think that I have only once seen a returned coolie from Assam; it was a woman who said that obstacles had been put in the way of her return, and that she had been beaten by the manager. I think that labour for Assam might be cheapened if recruiting licenses were abolished, so that the number of recruiters could be greatly increased and by their competition bring down the price of labour. I do not think there is much misrepresentation or danger of it in connection with recruiting; kidnapping and that sort of offence can be dealt with under the Penal Code. To avoid all danger of misrepresentation coolies might be produced before the nearest magistrate instead of being sent to the district head-quarters. Contracts if taken could be executed at head-quarters.

No. 77.—Mr. N. Venkatramana, *Honorary Magistrate and Contractor, Jubbulpore.*

I was until recently Manager of Olpherts' Paint Works at Kutni. It is getting difficult to obtain labour at Kutni except on high wages. During the last two or three years the wage of the ordinary coolie has risen from 2 to 3 annas. In my villages in the Murwara Tahsil daily labourers are paid 2 annas. I have brought numbers of them to Jubbulpore where I have taken a contract for building the new Cavalry lines. I am paying them 4 annas and find difficulty in keeping them on this wage.

People are not as a rule willing to go to Assam except on misrepresentation. There are plenty of people who might go, especially in the Native States north of this district. To popularise emigration to Assam I would recommend better wages and a scheme of colonization of time-expired labourers.

No. 78.—Mr. Balaji Gangadhar, *Extra Assistant Commissioner, Mandla.*

I have been in Mandla from 1894 to 1898 and from April 1902 till now. Sardari coolies recruited in Mandla are registered in Jubbulpore. Contractors register their coolies in Mandla, but the numbers they get are quite insignificant. I should not say that the Mandla Gond is ready to go to Assam. If he goes, it is because he is persuaded by promises of various kinds. Since the railway has come to the district and Government has been taking steps to extend cultivation in its ryotwari estates, the field for emigration to Assam has become very small. I refer to the open part of the district more especially. The aborigines in the more remote parts of the district will not be got for Assam: they will not readily leave their hills. Even the offer of good wages would not attract them. When local works are started in their neighbourhood the wilder Gonds will not go near them, and labour has to be obtained from a distance. They are quite unused to disciplined labour. I should say that no inducements would have any effect in leading them to emigrate. Population is very sparse over the greater part of the district outside the open country around Mandla, and in the latter, as I have said, there is ample employment for the labour which is available. So far as my experience goes the only emigrants who have hitherto gone to Assam have been from the open country, but I do not think that there are now many people who would go.

BENARES, 15th March 1906.

Benares.

No. 79.—Mr. Shibbonlall, *Deputy Collector, Benares.*

I am Registering Officer for emigration at Benares, but there is no inland emigration from this district; there is Colonial emigration only. I think that there are people sent away to Assam from here in an underhand way by the Colonial recruiters. The persons thus sent are, I should say, such as have not been passed for the Colonies. I do not know to what centre they are sent from here.

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Emigrants are quite willing to go to the Colonies, but they are not willing to go to Assam. From enquiries I have made from recruiting sub-agents and returned Assam emigrants I learn that one of the reasons why people do not go to Assam is that the wages there are low. The housing provided is also not suitable, as people in this country live in tiled houses, whereas in Assam they have to live in thatched huts. There is also a prevalent idea that the climate is very unhealthy, and that people suffer from guinea-worm and other complaints. I am also told that the cooking and eating arrangements are not good ; a person of any caste can enter the kitchen, although a Brahmin is nominally kept as cook. People are provided with tin vessels to eat and drink out of, whilst in their own country they use brass and *kasa*. There are also complaints of ill-treatment ; the garden managers are young Europeans, who are under the influence of the garden jemadars, and the latter are oppressive and corrupt. I have also heard that flogging of coolies goes on. People do not like their pay cut whilst in hospital, and they further aver that periods of sickness are added on to their contract terms. All this I have heard from people who have themselves been to Assam, but I can safely say that it is the general idea prevailing in these parts regarding Assam.

There is extensive emigration from this district to Calcutta for work in the factories. The people come and go as they like. I hear that in Calcutta they can earn from ₹12 to ₹15 per month. The labourers are industrious and will work steadily ; their one idea is to make money.

In 1904 there were 374 adult emigrants to the Colonies from this district, and in 1905, 700. Very good wages are offered there. There is a large labouring class in this district who are prepared to leave their homes for remunerative labour. But on present conditions I do not consider that any one is likely to go to Assam. To attract labour there you must offer from ₹10 to ₹12 a month, and must allow emigrants to return at the end of their contract, their return fares being paid. The offer of land might attract some of the poorer classes of low caste such as Chamars, but I hardly think people of the better castes would care to settle permanently in Assam.

Wages at head-quarters are from 4 to 6 annas for an ordinary coolie. In the district they are considerably less. I cannot quite say what the exact figures would be. But labour is scarce because of the extensive emigration to Calcutta. Mostly men emigrate to Calcutta. To the Colonies there is a large proportion of women, many of them widows who have gone wrong. The pressure on the soil is very great in this district, and the Purbia must go outside to make a living, and he goes to the place where he can make most and save.

No. 80.—Mr. Mahabir Prasad, *Deputy Collector, Jaunpur.*

I have been at Jaunpur since June last and before that I was at Sultanpur. There has been no registration of Assam coolies in Jaunpur for several years past. Benares is the depot for Jaunpur emigrants, but I learn that none have been registered there. I do not think that there is any emigration to the Assam tea gardens from Jaunpur. There used to be, but it has stopped because people have not got a favourable idea of work on the Assam tea gardens: they think that the wages are too low. I have heard, however, of some people being taken from Jaunpur to Raniganj for registration. People do go to Assam in large numbers to work on railways and under contractors but not to tea gardens. Contractors and their servants come and give a large advance to a man to supply 10 or 12 coolies. Such coolies are paid by piece-work and they earn ₹10 to ₹14 a month. The coolies stay for about eight months and then come back. They are pleased with the conditions there and go willingly.

People who have been to Assam also say that the managers of the tea gardens treat them badly and make them work very hard. They say that they are made to get up very early in the morning and do not get enough time for their mid-day meal, except in *Chait* and *Baisakh*, and are made to work even when they feel out-of-sorts, and they have to work in the rain. Women have to work four or five days after they have given birth to a child. I have also heard complaints that caste is lost by people being made to eat cooked rice in the company of others. They also complain that they are fined if they do not work well. Emigrants expect to get a monthly wage paid fully. They say that service on the tea gardens is practically slavery. I am also told that after the expiry of their agreements they are forced into executing a fresh agreement. There is general complaint about the climate.

People from Jaunpur go in large numbers to work in Calcutta ; some stay there 10 years, with holidays at intervals. I do not think that people will go at all to the tea gardens under present conditions. I think at least ₹10 a month should be offered before they will go. Advances should also be made. For an advance a man would go for two years or even four years if he were assured that he would have leave when it was necessary. The advance should be ₹20 to be deducted from the wages. Jaunpur men would ordinarily work off their advances honestly. They would make no objection to the contract being a penal one. All coolies should be registered in the district of recruitment ; by the time they have been taken down to Raniganj they are helpless, and have to agree to anything that is offered to them. People go readily to the Colonies from Jaunpur ; about 200 a year go. Those who go do so very contentedly. I have heard no complaint about the recruitment of women for the Colonies. If a daily wage is offered by the tea gardens it should be 12 annas a day so as to enable the coolie to take what holidays he wants.

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No. 81.—Mr. Ali Husain, *Deputy Collector, Mirzapore.*

I was formerly a Tahsildar in the Mirzapore district and have been there as Deputy Collector since January last. I am Registering Officer. The former registering officer has been transferred. Last year 66 labourers were recruited for Assam. This year none have been got. The labourers recruited last year were all for the Assam Railways and Trading Company's mines at Margherita. I have met no one who has been to an Assam tea garden, and cannot say whether people would be ready to go to the tea gardens from Mirzapore.

The wages of labour in the interior of the district are between 2 and 3 annas. At Mirzapore itself a daily labourer can earn 4 annas. There are many forms of employment, *viz.*, the Bengal Stone Company's works, lac and carpet factories, brass-ware factories and cotton mills. The Bengal Stone Company's works are all over the district; the other industries mentioned are at Mirzapore. There are no complaints from any of these firms of scarcity of labour.

There are aborigines in the Robertsgunj tahsil on the border towards Palamau and Sirguja. These people subsist on rude agriculture and daily labour. They are very poor. I have never heard of any movement amongst them outside the district. If they thoroughly understood that they would be better off in Assam, it is possible they might be willing to go there, but they would have to have everything explained to them through the Tahsildar and the Land Record Staff. But I do not think that people from the rest of the district will go to Assam. They are comfortably off at home and have no desire to go elsewhere. Very few people go away from the district for work, unless it be to Allahabad which is close by or to Cawnpore. They do not go towards Calcutta.

No. 82.—Mahabir Dube, *Emigration Sub-Agent for Jamaica and Fiji, Benares.*

People from this district go readily to the Colonies. They object to going to Assam as the climate is bad, the wages low, and they are put to much trouble there. I used to be the local agent of Mr. Mackertich of Calcutta at Hazaribagh for sardari recruiting for Assam. I gave up the work in 1901. I was five years in the business. I had been to Assam for a week in 1894. I had taken up a batch of 60 coolies for Jorabagan estate. I do not think it would be any use trying to start recruiting for Assam here on present conditions. You might get a few low caste people to go, but it would be very difficult to get them. So long as people can get high wages in Calcutta without any agreement, I should say there is no chance of their ever thinking of going to Assam.

No. 83.—Behari Lal, *Emigration Sub-Agent for British Guiana and Natal, Benares.*

I have been engaged in emigration work in Benares since 1890. I am now sending about 300 persons a year to the Colonies. So many people have died of plague that the supply has diminished. Formerly I was paid R25 a coolie. Last year British Guiana paid R56 for a woman, R41 for a man and R20-8 for a child. I have never recruited for Assam. Mr. Moses, my predecessor, sent some coolies there, but they were returned and he lost money by it. They were misdescribed as *jungli* coolies. I hear that sardars take away coolies from this district, but the coolies are not registered here. Coolies who come back from the Assam tea gardens are not willing to return there; they say that the wages are not high enough and the climate is not suited to them, and their caste prejudices are not observed. Low caste coolies have to give a caste feast on their return and high caste coolies find themselves excommunicated for good. Intending emigrants want boots to be provided on the gardens to protect themselves against guinea-worm. Garden sardars hold out false promises as to the wages which the coolies will earn. Colonial emigration is also unpopular because the emigrants lose caste in the way mentioned above. The officials and police look with the same disfavour on emigration as the general public do.

In order to encourage emigration to Assam, full particulars of the hours and nature of work should be recorded in the agreement forms. The coolies should be paid enough to enable them to live comfortably and still save. At least R10 for a man and R8 for a woman with free rations and clothing, should be given. They would go for four years on these terms. The manager of Messrs. Bird & Co., Contractors at Goalundo, pays R20 a month to Benares coolies and R30 to a mate; he can get 1,000 coolies in Benares whenever he wishes. The coolies who have worked for him will always go to him again.

All emigrants should be registered in the district where they are recruited. There should be a main depot in Calcutta like the Colonial Emigration Depot there, with a paid agent in charge, and the coolies should be drafted to the gardens from this. After the expiry of their contract the coolies should be returned through the depot. All sub-contractors should have matriculated at the University, and if possible, they should be paid a monthly salary; this would improve their status. The police should be prevented from interfering with emigration to Assam. Complaints should be lodged before the emigration officer who should enquire into them himself. The object is to place recruiting on a more respectable footing. Every effort should be made to respect caste prejudices onthe journey to the gardens; coolies in the depot should be given uncooked rations.

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16TH MARCH 1906.

No. 84.—MR. D. C. BAILLIE, I.C.S., *Commissioner, Benares Division.*

I have read the statements of the witnesses whose evidence was taken yesterday. I consider that what the Deputy Collector of Benares has said is quite correct, if the account given by him regarding the impressions prevailing here as to the conditions of service in Assam is fairly accurate. A coolie would not go from this on an offer of R5 per month. What has been said about the common mess in Assam would be a strong objection in the way of people going from here to Assam. The emigrants would certainly have caste difficulties on their return from Assam.

The Mirzapore Deputy Collector is wrong in saying that there are no complaints from the Mirzapore firms of scarcity of labour. The extension of the stone industry is limited by scarcity of labour. A lac proprietor, who in the hope of obtaining a supply of cheap labour had established a lac factory at Ahraura in the interior of the district, told me the other day that he had great difficulty in getting the necessary labour. I do not think that there is likely to be recruiting to any extent in the south of the Mirzapore district. It is true the people are very poor as regards money, but they are well enough fed and population is sparse. Cultivation is extensive for the population. The zemindars set their faces against recruiting down there; half a dozen of them have spoken to me recently about the recruitment that went on for the Assam coal mines, and objected to it strongly.

The Committee examined a Bania, who, while in service at Buxar on R8 a month 10 years ago, had been engaged by a recruiter, on the pretence of working as a sardar of coolies, on R12 a month, but when landed on a garden in Sylhet found himself set to work at hoeing as a coolie. He wounded himself on the foot with his *kodali* and eventually absconded, as the manager would not release him. He gave a very unfavourable account of work on a tea garden.

Ghazipur.

GHAZIPUR, 17TH MARCH 1906.

No. 85.—MR. ANIRUDHLAL MAHENDRA, *Deputy Collector, Ghazipur.*

I have been a Deputy Collector in Ghazipur for over 2 years. I am emigration Registering Officer. The population of the district fell from 1,077,909 to 913,818 in the decade 1891—1901, due chiefly to emigration. In the last four years the number of persons who have been recruited under Act VI of 1901 has been as follows:—

	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.
Assam Valley	342	262	217	282
Surma Valley	256	119	179	129

These figures include dependants. There is no recruitment under Chapter III in this district. In the present season 26 garden sardars have recruited 230 persons under Chapter IV of the Act, and 6 garden sardars 69 persons under Section 90. The latter was extended to this district last year, but garden sardars came down under it only since January last.

There is I consider a large field for emigration in this district. Notwithstanding the fall in the total population, the number of agricultural labourers enumerated at the census of 1901 was 108,303 as compared with 100,095 in 1891. There is a certain amount of emigration from Ghazipur to Calcutta, but it is not very marked; there is no fixed time for people to go to or return from Calcutta, but most go at the beginning of the cold weather, and they may stay there for one or two years or more.

I have only talked with sardars who have come down from Assam. I tried to get returned emigrants in order to speak to them about conditions there, but could not discover any. I do not think there is any prejudice against emigration to Assam in this district. The zemindars are no doubt opposed to it as it takes away their labour; they bring the police and chowkidars to put pressure on persons who are prepared to go to get them to change their minds. Amongst the people also there is a vague fear that by entering into a contract they may be selling their liberty for ever and may not be able to return to their homes. The cost of the journey back deters people from returning freely as it takes up a considerable portion of their savings, and they have to stay on in Assam because of this.

I had no experience of the previous Act, but under the present Act there are very few abuses, and recruitment takes place on the whole in a straightforward manner. I have never heard any one here speak of any ill-treatment on the tea gardens nor of people being afraid to go there because of losing caste. On the contrary, from all I hear people have nothing to complain of about their treatment in Assam. Nothing is known here about the right of

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private arrest conferred on employers in the gardens. The people are also too ignorant as a rule to realize their rights and liabilities under the contract system. I do not think that the term of four years, for which they are put under contract, has any effect in deterring emigrants from going to Assam. The period would not appear too long for an emigrant going to such a distance.

It is mostly low castes who go to Assam, Chamars and Bhars. A fair number of Rajputs also go. I think the present Act should not be repealed. If it were done away with, emigrants would not be so well looked after as they are at present. There would be no obligation imposed on persons engaged in recruiting to properly feed, clothe and house the emigrants, to whom these immediate comforts are attractive as an earnest of what they may expect in Assam. Emigrants would also not have the same sense of security in leaving their country as they now have. I fear that there would spring up a system of unlicensed recruiting, if the Act were done away with, which would bring in its train the abuses which the present Act was designed to remove. I am therefore decidedly opposed to the entire repeal of the Act. I would, however, advocate the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196. I have said the people down here do not know about the power of arrest which is given to the planter, but I consider that its withdrawal would be advisable, as it would give the labourers a greater sense of freedom, and there would be no chance of the power being abused.

I lay great stress on repatriation at the end of the term of contract. Any person who wishes to return to his country should have his fare paid and be allowed to go back if he wishes to. If this were freely done, there is every probability that the spread of facts regarding the conditions of labour on the gardens would result in the creation of an automatic system of recruitment, which would be very beneficial. If people had been well looked after on the gardens, it is very likely that they would freely return after a short visit to their homes, taking others with them. I do not think much is to be expected from placing facts regarding Assam before officers and others interested, in the recruiting districts. Only when knowledge regarding the prospects of Assam is spread through the villages of the district by the agency of returned emigrants, is there likely to be any real effect. The people who have thus returned would probably find it difficult to settle down in their old country and would be only too ready to get back to Assam after a time.

The wages of an ordinary labourer in this district amount to from R3-8 to R4-8 per month. In Assam the statutory wage is not much higher than this, but people know perfectly well that in Assam they can earn extra money by overtime, and it is this which at present attracts them. In Calcutta the wages are R8 for a man and R6 for a woman; people very readily go there on these terms. I think it would be a good plan to give better wages in Assam, so as to be able to compete with Calcutta. In Calcutta it is much more expensive to live than in Assam, but people do not think of that. They only consider the actual money they are to get, and imagine that by living on inferior food they will be able to save.

I do not consider that any colonization scheme is likely to succeed. Any such scheme would take a long time to bear fruit, and the chances are that it would produce a greater proportion of contented agriculturists than of labourers in want of employment, and the scheme would not pay its cost to the gardens.

From what I have seen of the working of Section 90, I consider that it is likely to work smoothly and well, and I am in favour of its being more extensively used.

Garden sardars come down here with certificates for the Ghazipur district, but they go to recruit in several of the surrounding districts where they have got their relatives and friends. As a matter of fact the law requiring registration to take place in the district of recruitment is at present inoperative. Sardars go as far afield as Basti and Gorakhpur and bring the persons they recruit to Ghazipur for registration. So far as I know there is no order by the Local Government allowing registration outside the local area specified in the garden sardar's certificate. The sardar of course always says that he has got his coolies from Ghazipur.

When the present Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley there is certain to be friction in the recruiting districts between the agencies of the two parts of Assam. The Surma Valley agency will have an advantage over that of the Assam Valley. The result will be underhand dealings, one agency trying to entice away the other agency's coolies. This goes on at present to some extent between the Colonial and the Inland emigration agencies.

There is emigration to the Colonies from this district, but it is not very popular. People object to going across the sea. Emigration to Assam is comparatively popular.

No. 86.—Mr. F. L. Brown-Constable, *Garden Manager, Sylhet.*

I have managed gardens in Cachar and Sylhet for 25 years. For the last three months I have been engaging labour for some gardens there under Section 92 of the Act in Buxar. I am also looking after the work of sardars at Ghazipur. I have always had labour from Ghazipur and Azamgarh and the neighbouring districts. I think that it is the best labour you can get for *bhil* gardens, especially in the Longai and Chargola valleys. It suits gardens on which there is not hard hoeing. It takes a little time to acclimatize the people on a new garden; but they are all right on established gardens. I get Chamars, Goalas and a few Telis,

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Kumhars, Koeris, etc. Koeris are about the best we get. I have always taken my coolies up with verbal contracts under Section 492, Indian Penal Code. I have never instituted a prosecution. Those I recruit myself very seldom bolt ; we take them at their word and they give no trouble. At the end of the three years they generally stay on ; they sometimes pay a six months' visit to their own country paying their own way. If they return with some friends they get their expenses paid. I find it much more difficult to get coolies now than 10 years ago, when I could take up 200 or 300 men. This season I have been able to get none myself, but have had to buy from the depot at Buxar. There used to be depots at Ghazipur, but they have closed owing to failure in the supply of coolies.

I attribute the difficulty in recruitment to the following causes :—

1. The registration before the magistrate.
2. The mills in Calcutta offer much better wages.
3. The Colonies offer better terms and repatriation at the end of the contract.

Seventy-five per cent. of the gardens will not touch the labour from these districts ; it is said that the coolies cannot stand the climate, and cannot do the work ; hoeing on a tea garden is much harder work than doing earth-work on a railway. I am paying contractors R50 per head for coolies. I pay men R6, women R5 and children R4 on the gardens.

I did not understand until it has now been explained to me that labourers recruited by a Section 90 sardar need not be produced before a magistrate. If this is worked we shall get more coolies, but not as many as before, because the competition of the mills is what really hurts us. Planters from my part of Sylhet dropped sending down sardars 2 or 3 years ago as the results of their recruiting were so poor. I am willing to pay the debts of intending emigrants. I believe that more use might be made of United Provinces labour than at present by established gardens in Sylhet which now refuse to take it. I could even now get a number of coolies if I were willing to take single men. I would not take any one for a year, he would not learn his work in that time ; a coolie has to be nursed for the first year. After the expiry of the first agreement I generally take a three years' Act XIII agreement, giving a R9 bonus and the pay continuing at R6, R5 and R4. I do not care whether Act VI is abolished or not, if I can work Section 90. I want to have power to send a man to catch a coolie who bolts even if he is only under an Act XIII agreement. I keep one or two of my depot coolies under Act VI agreements so as to be able to make an example when necessary.

No. 87.—RAGHUNATH SINGH, *Naib Tahsildar, Rasra, Ballia District.*

I have some acquaintance with recruitment for Assam as I am a zemindar of the Ballia district, and in my official capacity have had to make enquiries concerning it. People are not willing to go to Assam as it is an unknown country where they are poorly paid. The climate also is unsuitable to people from the United Provinces, and when they fall ill and go to hospital they only get diet and are unable to earn any money. The term of the four years' contract is also a strong deterrent to emigration. The only people who have gone from the Ballia district are those who have had family quarrels and have run away from home. I think that if the conditions of service in Assam were improved and the wages assimilated to those paid in Calcutta, then, but not till then, would people be willing to go to Assam. Many people from Ballia go to Calcutta, and there is also considerable emigration to the Colonies. They prefer the Colonies to Assam because the pay is higher.

No. 88.—MR. RAMASHANKAR, S.C.S., *Collector, Ghazipur.*

I do not consider that there is any feeling against emigration to Assam in this district. What is wanted is a proper recruiting agency. Some one is required who can properly supervise recruiting, and infuse confidence in the minds of intending emigrants. Either there should be a responsible European agent, or Government pensioners, who have held responsible positions, especially of the class of retired tahsildars, should be employed. I consider that by putting recruitment under the supervision of such pensioned officials, you would find that people would be ready to go to Assam. A pensioned tahsildar would be perfectly ready to take up work of this nature. You must raise the status of the agency employed before you can expect recruitment to be successful. Considerable numbers of people are taken from here to the Colonies, but they are of a somewhat indifferent type, being many of them people whom the district is well rid of.

The Committee questioned a garden sardar, a Hajam by caste, who had been 6 years on the Gotungha Garden of the Moabund Tea Company. His house was in the Benares district but his license was for Ghazipur. He was satisfied with the climate of Assam and now gets R10 a month as line chowkidar. He had been to Benares and had recruited 5 people, but the police had not allowed him to take them away. He now hopes to get coolies in Ghazipur.

The Committee examined Khedu, sardar of Dolai Tea Garden in Sylhet. He is a native of the Azamgarh district, is a Bhar by caste, and came down with a license for

Ghazipur. He had gone to Azamgarh to recruit and had taken up 10 coolies to the garden this year. He was sent back to get more coolies, and obtained 7, of whom 6 were taken from him by the police, and he only succeeded in landing one at the depot at Ghazipur. He works as a coolie on the garden and receives R7-8 a month. He states that there are many people in Azamgarh who would be ready to emigrate to Assam. On being further questioned he states that it was the village chowkidar who beat him and took away his coolies and also that the zemindars obstruct people who wish to emigrate to Assam. **Ghazipur.**

CHUPRA, 19TH MARCH 1906. **Saran.**

No. 89.—MR. M. HAQUE, BAR.-AT-LAW, *Zemindar, Chupra, Saran District.*

I have always resided in the Saran district. The district is very densely populated. There is a very large class of labourers, who are in poor condition, but nearly all of them have got some interest in land, however small. The landless labourer is not common. Very many of the poorer classes go to Bengal to get work and make a living. The emigrants belong mostly to the lower castes. The usual period of emigration is from October to March. People generally go at the end of the rains and return when the hot weather commences. Most people stay for one season only, although others remain away longer.

There is a good deal of emigration to the Colonies from Chupra. I have heard of people going to Assam, but there is very little movement in that direction. Practically no one ever speaks of going to Assam in these parts. The labourers who go to Calcutta earn from R15 to R20 per month. This I know from accounts given me by my own returned ryots. Even locally the rate of the daily wage for a man is between 3 and 4 annas. Ten years ago it was 2 annas; now nobody will work for less than 3 annas. In my opinion, the loss of freedom entailed by the four years' contract in Assam is a strong deterrent against people going there. But in any case I do not think you will get any one to dream of going to Assam, unless the pay is equal to what can be earned in Calcutta. A current rumour here is that the rice for the labourers is cooked by one man. People from these parts have objections on this ground as their caste is spoiled. I do not know whether the rumour is correct, but it is current here, and so long as that is the case, you will not get people to go. People have also a dread of the compound system which is said to be in force. By this I mean that the coolies are made to live within a circumscribed area which they may not leave. This is the idea that is current here, although I do not know about the matter personally. The fraudulent misrepresentations of recruiters have also had much to do with the dislike of people to go to Assam. A man is sent up there with various promises made to him; he gets to the garden and finds most of them untrue; he writes back and warns his friends down here against going to Assam.

Without greatly increased pay and greater freedom on the gardens I do not think that emigration to Assam is ever likely to make headway in this district. I do not think that a grant of land in Assam would tempt people to go from here and settle in Assam. They are very fond of their own country and would want to get back eventually.

No. 90.—BABU SHYAMA CHARAN GHOSE, B.L., *Pleader and Vice-Chairman of the Municipality, Chupra, Saran District.*

I have lived in this district since my birth. I have recently met three persons who had worked on Assam tea gardens. They told me that the climate of Assam is not good, and they also said that they were kept there more as prisoners than as free men. They expressed their willingness to return to Assam as free labourers if they would be allowed to visit their homes when they wanted to do so. They complained that they got 5 seers of rice a week and that when the price of this was cut out of their pay there was very little money left for them to receive. People who go to Calcutta for work often take their families with them, but not on the first trip. In the town here coolies get 3½ annas a day and the rate shows signs of increasing to 4 annas.

In order to make Assam popular, a responsible officer should be appointed to explain to the people that there is no ill-treatment of labourers there, that the labourers are free, and that they will receive sufficient pay to enable them to save money. Emigration has suffered in the past owing to the lies told by contractors; so people will not believe what a professional recruiter tells them. Labourers should be given leave every year to enable them to recruit their health in their own country. There is a great supply of labour here, and I think that, if the steps I have recommended were taken, many people would go to Assam. If people were paid R15 or R16 per month they would go to Assam willingly; some, however, might go for less, but not readily.

No. 91.—MR. G. M. HODDING, *Borhogah, Saran District.*

I am engaged in indigo planting and sugar manufacture. I have lived in the Saran district for 22 years. I do not know whether the people of this district have ever gone to the Assam tea gardens, but a considerable number go to Assam from September to May; they

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probably go to do the earth-work on railways, etc. They come back with any amount of money. They consider that the climate of Assam is bad and they would have to be offered something very good to induce them to stay there all the year round. This year the cold weather exodus has been larger than ever before; at one road-side station near my factory R2,000 worth of third class tickets were sold in a day to coolies going east to work, and for some weeks the daily takings averaged R1,500. These men do not take their women. The exodus was so great this year that there was not enough labour left in the district; factories could not get their lands dug by November as formerly, but the work dragged on till February. Three concerns I know have had this year to double their rates for digging. We give petty contracts for digging and keeping the land clear till sowing time. The rate has been raised from R1 to R2 a bigha for digging alone (a bigha = $\frac{20}{27}$ of an acre). I do not think that a man would go from here on a two years' contract for less than R7 or R8 a month, and he would not take up his women folk. In my opinion no one would take a four years' contract for work in Assam. Until lately there has been no tendency for wages to rise; the current rate of wages hitherto has been R2-8 to R3 per month. But this year there has been a distinct tendency for wages to rise in the cold weather; I refer to the wages of able-bodied men who could go eastward to get work; the wages of women and children remain stationary. The men who return from working in the east bring back as much as R50 or R60. They pay their rent and refuse to do any more daily labour until they go off eastwards in the following year.

No. 92.—Mr. G. D. MacGregor, *Arrowah, Saran District.*

I have been in the Saran district for 34 years. Almost all the time I have been an indigo planter, but now I grow sugar and other crops and have zemindari interests. A large proportion of the lower classes of this district emigrate for the cold and part of the hot weather. Great numbers go to Calcutta and the jute centres, also to Eastern Bengal for railway and other work. 500 labourers left about two months ago for work at Fraserganj. I have met the Chupra labourer also in Burma. I know for a fact that very few people go from this district to the Assam tea gardens; of late years practically no one has gone. The gardens are unpopular for three reasons of which I have heard. The first is the long period for which the emigrants have to engage themselves; the second is the common belief that Assam is still very unhealthy; the third and chief reason is that the labourer makes as much by working for 5 months in Calcutta and the jute centres as he can in a whole year in Assam. He can also leave Calcutta and the eastern districts any time he pleases and is within easy reach of his home. Under existing conditions there is a very little chance of any one going from this part to Assam.

In the cold weather we are now finding it sometimes difficult to get the men labourers we require, although there are thousands of women and children available. The men alone go as a rule to the eastern districts for work; the women and children stay at home, and are often badly off until they begin to get remittances from the men who have gone away. As a result of this cold weather exodus, there has been a distinct tendency for wages to rise in the case of men. There has been also some increase in wages all round due to the rise in the prices of food-grains. We have now to pay 3 annas a day for a man at this time of the year, against the old rate of 1½ to 2 annas.

I do not think that the Saran man would agree to being tied down if you got him to go to Assam. He dreads being tied down, although he might stay of his own accord for three years or more, if he had sufficient inducements offered to him. He is a very independent person and likes to have his own way. I do not think the Saran man would ever take his wife and children with him to Assam. It would be quite contrary to his present custom at any rate. The people who leave the district are only the lower classes, but even they do not take their women or children with them when they go out for work. The Saran labourer is very much of a homing bird and he only goes for long enough to make himself comfortable for the rest of the year, when he either has his cultivation or can work for the ryots. Nearly everybody has some little cultivation of his own. In the present year the exodus has been very great, but I have met in the last fortnight people who have come back much earlier than usual, complaining that they had had difficulty in finding work. Another matter is that the Saran man has generally built himself a tiled house, at a cost of R25 to R75. If he went away and left this, he would get practically nothing for it, and this in a manner ties him to his village. He has also his tenant right in his land to which he clings.

I do not consider that any movement to Assam is possible on the present wage offered on the tea gardens. In any case you would have to do without a contract or adopt one of a very mild nature. And you would then have to make the wages more attractive than what is earned in the eastern districts. The Saran ryot also thinks that Assam labour is a kind of slavery. I have never heard people give any instances of bad treatment, but it is the common impression, and until you get rid of it, no one will go. If a planter came down here and got in touch with the people and explained matters to them, setting forth that the women and children can also earn money, it might be possible to induce a few to try Assam. But that would be the only chance of getting them to go, and you must of course convince them that they will be better off than they now are by going to Calcutta and the other industrial centres. The offer of land would be an inducement to the Saran man to go to Assam, that

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and the knowledge that his women and children could earn wages and would be always with him. But only an Assam planter can explain all this to the people, and he must place himself in touch with planters here so as to get their advice and obtain the benefit of their knowledge of the people.

Hazaribagh.

MADHUPUR, 20TH MARCH 1906.

No. 93.—MR. H. C. L. BAMBER, *Superintendent of Police, Hazaribagh.*

I have been in Hazaribagh for two years; I have also seen service in Assam. A large number of emigrants for Assam go from the Hazaribagh district. Hazaribagh has been notified under Section 3 of Act VI of 1901, but notwithstanding this there has been a regular system going on of taking people secretly out of the district to Raniganj, Asansole, etc. In consequence of the malpractices that went on, I had enquiries made as to the number of persons shown in the Raniganj depot registers as having come from Hazaribagh. It was impossible to get complete information, but in the year 1904 the number of Hazaribagh emigrants who had gone to Assam from Raniganj alone was 715. I instituted prosecutions in four cases against 11 persons, residents of Hazaribagh, who were engaged in this traffic. I got convictions against all of them under Section 164 of Act VI. I had a nominal list made out of the coolies who had been thus illegally removed, but in the case of a large proportion false names and wrong addresses had been given. The fiction is that the coolies have gone to Raniganj of their own accord to look for work. As a matter of fact this is entirely false. The coolies are taken out of the district by unlicensed recruiters and are regularly met at Giridih and Katras by chuprassis sent up from Raniganj to take them down there. The police cannot take cognizance of offences under Section 164 of Act VI, and it is very difficult to find the relations of abducted coolies so as to get them to lodge a complaint, owing to the regular plan of giving false descriptions in the Raniganj depots. This is still going on freely. The prevalence of this system makes emigration to Assam unpopular in the district.

There are sardars at work in the district under a local agent. They are I understand finding difficulty in getting people to go with them on account of the opposition of the local zemindars. I think that the sardars work on the whole fairly well. Section 90 is in force in the district and is open to no objection. There is a general complaint on the part of the free sardars that they have to accompany their own coolies to Assam, and are not allowed to send them in the ordinary way through forwarding peons. They have often to leave the district before they have got all the men they want to take with them.

There is one licensed contractor in the district, but he does nothing.

In my opinion the country people know very little about Assam, so few people have returned to tell them anything about it. The only motive that takes people there is the desire to get away from their creditors, when they are hopelessly in debt. It is only people who are broken who go. There is an extensive field for emigration in Hazaribagh. There is a large labouring class who are landless and very badly off and who could be readily taken up to Assam with great advantage to themselves. But you must have an arrangement for letting them get back again to see their friends. The fact that a man is lost when he gets to Assam is a great deterrent to emigration. I would allow an emigrant to return after two years; the present term of four years is too long, and people do not like it. The wages of the daily labourer in Hazaribagh are very small; he is generally paid in kind and gets little more than a bare subsistence.

I do not know whether emigrants who are sent up free of contract under Section 90 get rice supplied to them at fixed rates, nor whether they are let off cuttings in their first six months. If the absence of the contract deprives them of these privileges, the matter should certainly be put right, if Section 90 is to be rendered popular.

There is large recruitment for the Duars in Hazaribagh. People go forward freely to the Duars, as they can return when they please. The Duars sardar comes down and enlists the coolies, and gets commission on the wages earned by his coolies. I have never heard of any complaint of any kind in connection with this Duars recruiting, and I should like to see the Assam system assimilated to it. I do not think that you can abolish the Act, as you would let in the Raniganj people free of all control. But it should be possible to limit recruitment to garden sardars only, working freely under Section 90, and that is what I should like to see. I have seen the coolie up in Assam, and there is no question that he is much better off there than he is in Hazaribagh.

There is no regular exodus to the mines from Hazaribagh. I cannot say whether it is because the work is uncongenial that the Hazaribagh coolie does not go to the mines, but he appears to have no inclination towards the work.

I consider that it will be very difficult to work two systems of recruitment side by side, *viz.*, free labour for the Surma Valley and Act recruitment for Assam. I fear that the unlicensed arkati would come in again, nominally recruiting for Cachar and Sylhet and afterwards persuading his coolies to agree to go to Assam.

No. 94.—MR. C. A. RADICE, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Hazaribagh.*

I have been Deputy Commissioner of Hazaribagh for 1½ years. I had no acquaintance with emigration to Assam before this.

Hazaribagh.

I do not consider that there is an ample supply of surplus labour in Hazaribagh. The new Grand Chord Railway from Katras to Gaya, which is still under construction, has had difficulty in getting labour. The District Engineer, who is a reliable man, has given me figures which show that it is not easy to get coolies for ordinary road work in the district, as used to be the case. Petty landowners and well-to-do ryots, who have received land improvement loans, have been anxious to get the loans at certain dates, saying that at other times they would not be able to get coolies to do their work. Wages are no doubt low, probably ranging about 6 pice for a man, but it is difficult to give an exact value, as wages are paid generally in kind. I do not, however, think the conclusion can be drawn from this that labour is abundant, as it is well known that in agricultural districts custom rules wages more than demand and supply. I believe that the system of serfdom, according to which a man borrows say ₹10 from an agriculturist and is bound to work for him whenever required, is against emigration. The system is very common in Hazaribagh. The serf is known locally as a *kamia;* he is paid as a rule in kind when the crop is reaped. Sometimes he is paid daily, but the creditor takes care that the debt is not finally repaid. The creditor thus assures himself of a supply of cheap labour, which he is most unwilling to lose. Even if the recruiting agencies undertook to pay off the *kamia's* debts, I do not think that the creditor would acquiesce; the latter does not really want to be paid, and I can suggest no way of getting round the difficulty. A note on the subject of *kamiaship* has been supplied by me to the Officer in charge of the Ethnographical Survey for Bengal.

I have recently conducted very extensive enquiries in connection with chowkidari taxation in the villages. I have constantly found cases of people being absent from work at Serajgunj, in Calcutta and in Burma. But I have very rarely come across any mention of emigration to Assam. The deduction I have made from this is that the former class are temporary absentees who have gone out to make money and return. The Assam emigrant does not come back and is not heard of in his village. I think that the fact of his not returning is a reason for the unpopularity of emigration to Assam.

Round Hazaribagh itself there are numbers of people who have gone to Burma temporarily for service in the Survey Department. These are people who are fairly intelligent, and they go readily as far away as Burma for the field season. I think they would as readily go to Assam on the same conditions, that is, if they were allowed to come back yearly, or perhaps every two years. I conclude that the four years' contract has a deterrent influence on emigration to the tea gardens.

I frequently get petitions in Court from the relations of people who have disappeared, generally boys or women. The suggestion in the petition is invariably that the person who has disappeared has gone to Assam. Hazaribagh is a district where people do not petition readily. They have got to go a long way to a Court, and if they put in a petition, it means there is a real grievance; and the fact that such petitions are put in so often as they are shows that there is a good deal of enticement practised, and this all tends to make Assam emigration unpopular. As a rule, it is next to useless to make enquiries on these petitions as the missing people have been sent away under wrong names and addresses.

I wish to make a suggestion which would put a stop to this misdescription of coolies. Every coolie who passes through Goalundo or Dhubri should have his name and address and thumb impression recorded there. The Embarkation Officer should receive after a few days a receipt from the garden for each coolie, with his thumb impression. The Embarkation Officer would compare the thumb impression with the one he has, and report the name and address of the coolie to his alleged district of residence for identification. If the name and address is found incorrect, I would make it the rule that the coolie should be repatriated at the cost of the person who assisted him to emigrate or, failing this, at the cost of the garden. The Embarkation Officer should tell a coolie that he is bound to give his correct name and address, and it should be penal to give a false name and address. This would be necessary to protect the planter. If you once establish some such system, you will do away with all the enticement that goes on in recruiting. Assam will be no longer the abyss in which people disappear without a trace. The free contractor at Raniganj would find it impossible to work under a system of surveillance such as I have described. The sardar would be free to work unhampered by the existing competition.

I am in favour of the Section 90 system. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the abuses that previously took place in connection with Assam recruitment, to say whether all registration should be done away with. In Hazaribagh the system prevails of taking Section 90 coolies to the registering officer for the sardar's own protection. If the system of identification which I have advocated is introduced there would certainly be no necessity for producing emigrants before the registering officer.

I wish to make a suggestion which would popularize emigration, *viz.*, that at least once a year the coolie in Assam should be made to communicate with his family down here and get a reply back. The communication should be made through the district officer so that the practice may not be allowed to become a dead letter. The Inspector in Assam might send the information down to the district officer when he visits the garden, and the district officer would have it communicated to the people concerned in the villages, sending back in return information regarding the emigrant's relatives.

MIDNAPUR, 26TH MARCH 1906. Hazaribagh.

No. 95.—MR. D. O. LOTTERI, *Local Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Hazaribagh.*

I have resided at Hazaribagh for the last 15 years, and before that was at Dhubri for 2 years as Forwarding Agent, so I have 17 years' experience of recruiting operations.

I am doing fairly well this year in recruiting at Hazaribagh and have obtained more emigrants than last year. The following are the statistics of recruiting for the last four years through my agency :—

SEASON.	SARDARS RECEIVED			LABOURERS RECRUITED		
	Under Section 56.	Under Section 90.	TOTAL.	Under Section 56.	Under Section 90.	TOTAL.
1902-03 . . .	320	32	352	1,116	68	1,184
1903-04 . . .	469	23	492	865	40	905
1904-05 . . .	535	16	551	1,608	60	1,668
1905-06 . . .	462	131	593	1,180	199	1,379
(Up to the 22nd March 1906.)						

I think that there is plenty of labour available for Assam in the Hazaribagh district. The chief reason for the poor supply of labourers is the obstruction on the part of village headmen and of the creditors of the poorer classes. Owing to their opposition the garden sardar cannot recruit openly. The falling off in recruiting has taken place during the last 5 years. Before that the opposition of the headmen, etc., existed, but not to so great an extent as at present. In my opinion the obstruction of the village headmen, etc., is the sole cause for the falling off in the supply of recruits. I know the people well and talk their language, and I do not think that the four years' contract or registration deters people from going to Assam.

Section 90 is convenient to people engaged in recruiting, but its use does not increase the supply of labour for Assam. Sardars working under it do not obtain a larger number of recruits than those who work under Section 56. Whether Section 90 emigrants are put under agreement on the garden or not, I do not know, but occasionally labourers recruited under Section 90 object to not being given an agreement, when they see others recruited under Chapter IV entering into contracts. A manager, however, who does not wish his recruits put under contract, ought to send down his sardars under Section 90, instead of under Chapter IV, so as to save himself registration fees. I am under the impression that managers think that mere registration gives them a legal hold over the coolies, and so send down their sardars under Section 56, whereas on the expiry of 15 days after registration all hold over the labourer lapses unless he has executed an agreement.

As a remedy for the existing state of affairs I would recommend that the District Magistrate and District Superintendent of Police should circulate information through the villages, that any headman or creditor who averts a person going off to Assam or to the coal mines would be liable to prosecution. Many of the bonds executed by debtors provide for the arrest of the debtor by his creditor. The reason why headmen, etc., are so intent on keeping labourers is that there has been a considerable drain on the district partly through emigration to the tea gardens and partly by people going elsewhere for work. For instance, the Survey Department of India draw something like 4,000 or 5,000 labourers a year from Hazaribagh. These figures are merely an estimate as I have been unable to ascertain the exact numbers. People go to the Survey Department more readily than to Assam because the pay is better. Survey khalasis get R10 a month in Burma, and R8 in Bakarganj and other parts of Bengal. In my opinion the wages offered in Assam are quite sufficient to induce the Hazaribagh coolie to go there. In his own country he can earn nothing like as much as he can in Assam, but naturally if some one else offers him better wages still he will go to him. I therefore advocate that the Survey Department of India be approached with a view to getting their khalasi requirements from the United Provinces and Oudh, as they used to do. I believe that 20 or 25 years ago all their requirements were drawn entirely from the United Provinces.

To a great extent debts of intending emigrants are paid off by me at present, but the difficulty is that the creditor does not want to be repaid. He wishes to have a hold over the labourer.

If the Act were repealed I fear that abuses would arise again in a very pronounced form. I do not, however, think there would be danger of this if recruitment by contractors were abolished and only recruitment by sardars allowed by law. I do not think that the planter would lose by the abolition of contractors, but he would have to send sardars to recruit all

Hazaribagh. the year round. Gardens which suddenly want labour and cannot spare sardars to recruit it must employ contractors.

I do not see that the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will give rise to any difficulty, but I do not think that the cost of labour for the Surma Valley will fall, as their sardars work in the same way as those for the Assam Valley.

Labourers recruited by sardars through me do not cost on an average more than ₹50, including clothing and outfit, landed at Asansole. According to the requirements of the Bengal Government emigrants proceeding from Hazaribagh to Giridih have to take 6 days in doing the journey, whereas the ordinary traveller can do it in 4 days. I suggest that this should be altered.

I have had instances of time-expired labourers, who had returned to Hazaribagh, asking me to communicate with their old employers with a view to obtaining permission from them to go back to the garden. They are willing to pay their own way expenses provided they are assured that they will get back to their old garden.

It is a good thing to send down as sardars, labourers who have been recruited six months or so previously, as such persons have not lost touch with their villages, and their early return shows the villagers that they have not gone into penal servitude and encourages them to emigrate. This system is being gradually introduced and a good many managers have adopted it.

MADHUPUR, 20TH MARCH 1906.

Santal Pergannas.

No. 96.—KHAN BAHADUR SYED NEJABAT HUSSAIN, *General Manager of Court of Wards' Estates, Santal Pergannas.*

I have been in the district since 1880, and know the Deoghur and Jamtara sub-divisions best. Emigration to Assam was formerly common but has decreased since about 1900. The reason is that time-expired coolies who have returned dissuade others from going; they say that they have *taklif* in Assam and if they do not like the garden for which they have contracted they cannot go to another. They aver that they were taken away on promises made by the sardars of getting ₹10 to ₹20 a month and having only to work as sardars. They say that they are very well treated and fed until they embark at Goalundo, and after that the food gets worse and they are not well looked after when ill. I have learned this myself from time-expired coolies. Those who go without agreement are satisfied; they go to Darjeeling, Dhubri and Assam without agreement and are quite satisfied; if they do not like a garden they go to another. Within the last five years many more people have gone to the coal fields than before, and this has much diminished emigration to Assam. They generally go to the mines from February to May and then return to cultivate their fields with ₹10 to ₹20 in their pockets. More people would go to Assam if there were no agreement and coolies were free to go from one garden to another. I do not think that they would go from here for less than ₹10 a month even without an agreement. Babu Bijai Narayan Kundu of Madhupur took a contract on the Assam-Bengal Railway and tried to get coolies from here by giving ₹20 advance and ₹10 wages, but only got a few to go. Coolies are secretly taken away from these parts to Raniganj, and there are a number of men working under the wing of one licensed recruiter at Madhupur. The people of these parts do not want to leave their homes and land for 5 or 10 years at a time.

No. 97.—BABU B. C. RAI, *Agent of Babu Bijai Narayan Kundu, Madhupur.*

Babu Bijai Narayan Kundu had a contract on the Assam-Bengal Railway. I was his agent. We took up 400 or 500 labourers from here, paying them their railway fare and an advance of from ₹10 to ₹15, all of which was recovered. They used to earn from ₹15 to ₹20 per month in Assam on earth work and masonry work. Masons could earn more than the sums stated. The labourers went up in September or October, and returned before the rains set in. They paid their own way home. As soon as a man got ill we used to send him home, so few died. The labourers generally took their wives with them. These were not Santals.

More people from here do not go to the Assam tea gardens, because the pay offered is insufficient. The daily wage on a tea garden is 2 or 3 annas as compared with 12 annas on the railway. Local free labourers in Gauhati, Tezpur and Goalpara also can earn 6 or 7 annas daily. I have been to these places and saw this for myself.

RAMPUR HAT, 21ST MARCH 1906.

No. 98.—MR. O. ST.J. DALY, *Local Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Dumka, Santal Pergannas.*

I have been at Dumka in my present capacity for the last 18 months, and before that I spent 2½ years in the Hoshangabad district of the Central Provinces from 1896 to 1899,

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and three years in Sambalpur, from 1901 to 1904, where I worked as local agent. When I was in Hoshangabad my sardars also worked in Narsinghpur, Betul, Saugor, and Nimar. The first season was a famine year and I sent up over 600 adults; recruitment fell off with the return of normal seasons. I at that time considered that there was a good chance of recruiting labour in the Nerbudda valley districts, but I was handicapped by not having sardars who belonged to the locality.

I have had about 450 sardars down this year for the Assam and Surma Valleys working in the Santal Pergannas. Up to date they have recruited about 400 souls, and I hope to obtain another 200 before the season is over. The results will scarcely work out to more than one labourer per sardar. The rice was a poor crop in several parts of the district, and the *makai* crop was also a partial failure. The reason why results have not been better is that the competition for labour in the Santal Pergannas is very keen. I refer to emigration to the Duars, the competition of a licensed contractor who is doing a good business at Dumka and to the fact that a number of labourers have been engaged by Government for service in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. I pay ₹5 to each labourer recruited before he is despatched. This sum is not recovered on the garden. The majority of the sardars sent to me are not Santals. The contractor gives the coolies recruited by him ₹25 each. I do not think that by paying a bonus of ₹25 I would show as good results as the contractor, as many of the sardars sent down to me have been too long on the garden and so have lost touch with their villages, whereas the contractor has his men living here all the year round.

The people in this district look upon emigration to Assam with disfavour. They think that they are being sold for a price, and they do not know what is to become of them in the future. Their family ties are broken up and they have no idea where they are going or when they will return. I think also that the recollection of former abuses is still prevalent and keeps them from coming readily forward.

I believe that many more people go to the Duars than to Assam from this district. I attribute this to the fact that emigrants to the Duars can return when they please. I do not think that emigrants really understand the conditions of the contract until they come to the place of accommodation. The offer of a one-year contract instead of a contract for four years would, I consider, attract more people.

About one-fourth of the sardars sent down this year were under Section 90. Speaking generally, I find very little difference in the results of the work of sardars working under Chapter IV and those working under Section 90. Section 90 emigrants are put up before the registering officer for inspection. This is in accordance with the registering officer's wish. I have received no written orders on the subject, but I have frequently spoken to Mr. Thomson on the matter, and he has insisted on the labourers being produced before him. I have reported the arrival of sardars working under Section 90 to the Deputy Commissioner, but Mr. Thomson has ruled that this is not sufficient and has directed that they should be produced before him in order to have their certificates countersigned. I have no objections to urge to the manner in which registration is carried out at Dumka. Up to date the two systems have given much the same results; but I would consider it a distinct advantage if the provisions of Section 90 were carried out and the sardar required only to report his arrival and departure in writing. Section 90 recruiting is practically free and its general use would, I think, lead to more emigrants going, besides dispensing with much clerical work and other formalities under Chapter IV. The absence of a contract is also a point in its favour. As it is, the sardar frequently does not tell intending emigrants that they have to execute a four years' contract, and they do not find out about this till they come in to me, when the fact that they have to give a four years' contract sometimes makes them unwilling. What I mean is that a Section 90 emigrant goes free and more coolies can be obtained if no contract is required and they can come and go as they please. People have a natural antipathy to entering a place of accommodation or appearing before a magistrate. I therefore think that it would be easier to get emigrants under Section 09 than under Chapter IV without a contract.

Interference by village headmen, policemen and railway clerks does much to deter emigration to Assam. Headmen object to their people going to Assam, and this is due to the bad odour attaching to emigration to that Province. Railway servants occasionally interfere with emigrants after they have been registered and put under contract. They speak to them and try to dissuade them from going to Assam. If village headmen and chowkidars were better acquainted with the true facts concerning conditions in Assam, it would assist emigration. I would suggest that the district authorities should publish information regarding Assam, so as to correct this. There are a good many time-expired Assam coolies in the district. I have had conversations with some of them and they have spoken favourably of the conditions of service there. Their chief grievance was that the cost of their journey home was not paid by the garden. I consider therefore that a system of repatriation might be beneficial. Considering that labourers are ordinarily paid 2 annas a day for field work in this district, I should say that the wages offered in Assam are sufficient. In this district women and children get very little regular employment, while on tea gardens the whole family can earn money. I therefore consider that the wages paid in Assam are ample. I could not say whether more people would go on the offer of a higher wage than at present, as the prejudice against Assam must first be got over. I believe that a fair number of people from this district go to work in the coal mines; I do not know what the wages are there.

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If the Act were abolished altogether, I fear that the abuses which existed under Act I of 1882 would arise again. If the contractors' system were abolished we would get more sardari coolies. I do not, however, think that the licensed contractors' system can be done away with, as the contractor is the pioneer of the business, and without his bringing in new blood the supply of useful sardars would fall short.

I am of opinion that the abolition of the Act in the Surma Valley will prejudicially affect recruiting for Assam. At present the Duars are more attractive than Assam, and the Surma Valley will then be in the same position. Even the general use of Section 90 by Assam would not compensate for the complete freedom of the Surma Valley without an Act. The abolition of the Act in the Surma Valley will, I fear, lead to abuses as regards the enticement of single men and women by contractors.

Last year my coolies cost ₹45 per head landed at Naihati. A sardar, as a rule, receives a first advance of ₹5 and then ₹10, and after that another ₹10 or ₹15 if he has hopes of bringing in coolies. The first ₹5 he receives he spends upon himself and makes no effort to work. He spends the subsequent advances in paying the petty debts of his coolies or in feeding them. He is paid a bonus for each person recruited on arrival on the garden. As much as ₹30 for a coolie landed on the garden is sometimes paid. I have heard of cases where the promised bonus has not been paid. I cannot say why the promise had not been kept.

I have out-agencies at Ghazipur, Gaya, Luckiserai and Asansole. The Asansole out-agency has not done well, as the rice crop has been fairly good and there is strong competition on the part of unlicensed contractors. Gaya and Luckiserai are doing much the same as last year, but I have not the figures with me. At Luckiserai and Asansole, though the labourers are recruited under Section 92, they are required to be produced before a magistrate under the new Bengal Rule 224. The consequence is that Section 92 is less favourable to our working than Section 90. This is not insisted upon at Gaya. Luckiserai I consider to be a good centre for recruitment; Gaya is also good.

No. 99.—Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud, *Benagaria, Santal Pergannas.*

I am in charge of the Indian Home Mission to the Santals, and have lived in this district for 40 years. Sixteen years ago I had to buy two tea gardens adjoining a Christian colony belonging to our mission in Goalpara, and I arrange for the supply of labour for these gardens. We have about 420 acres under tea and employ about 400 coolies; we pay men ₹7 and women ₹5. The coolies go up without contract and usually stay 3 or 4 years. The railway fare is ₹4 and it is recovered from the coolie. A coolie saves ₹50 or ₹60 in his first year and he sends some of that home to his family or buys a pair of bullocks. A coolie is quite efficient for hoeing during his first year. I think that I could get 1,000 coolies a year from this district if I wished. Up to two years ago I paid nothing for recruiting, but during the last two years I have paid ₹1 to each coolie who came forward or brought another coolie. My coolies usually come from the Dumka Sub-division.

It cannot be said that emigration to the Assam tea gardens is popular with the Santals. Their first objection is that when engaged by contractors they do not know where they will go and whether they will find Santals on the gardens or not. Then the country is very distant and of those who go to Assam not more than one quarter return to the district. On the garden they are thrown into close contact with people of other castes and they do not like this. They feel the four-year contract very irksome, and they say that when their term is over they are plied with liquor and in that state induced to extend their agreements. Some dissatisfied returned coolies preach against Assam. Such men say that if the coolies wish to visit their friends on another garden they are arrested and beaten and ill-treated. Such stories told by their own people are readily believed by the Santals. Unprincipled contractors again have told the people that the wages are higher than they really are, and the work very easy, and that there will be no tribal supervision over their morals; but the falsehood of their stories is eventually found out and this makes the people distrustful of recruiters. These deceptions have unquestionably done more harm to emigration than anything else.

I have also had complaints that on some gardens there are no Santal neighbours for people to visit. Some persons have complained to me that they are forced to work when unwell until they get really ill; this is thoroughly believed.

I have met many tea planters and garden proprietors and I consider it a great shame that they should have to pay ₹100 or ₹150 for a coolie. The people also strongly object to the system of buying and selling. I think that the planter's and the Santal's interests are really one: the planter wants labour to develop his estates and the Santal wants new land to settle in, and Assam is the natural field for the expansion of the Santal people. The remedies I would propose are as follows:—

(1) I would urge Government to give land to settlers in the neighbourhood of the tea gardens; this would be extremely popular with Santals. Such a Santal colony would attract other Santal emigrants, but they must feel that they are perfectly free.

(2) I would have the fare of the coolie paid back to his country at the expiry of his contract if he wishes to return, so as to let him see that he is really free to exercise his volition in the matter.

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3. Gardens with Santal labour should allow their coolies to bring up an influential Santal to inspect the garden and see that they are really comfortable there; the expense would be trifling.

The main thing, however, is to do away with all "selling" by eliminating the contractor. I would not do away with Government supervision over recruiting, because all the old recruiting abuses would return. The Act protects the coolie; there must be registration in the district of recruitment so that the Santals can know where their people have gone. There is no trust to be placed in a sardar; all sardari coolies must be registered before a magistrate. There is no doubt at all that coming before a magistrate gives the emigrant confidence. If the whereabouts of a coolie is known his friends can correspond with him. It is very important to keep the emigrant in touch with his home.

There has been a steady movement of Santals eastwards as far back as their history can be traced; this movement continues and will eventually reach Assam.

I think R7 and R5 are fair wages to pay a Santal man and woman, as they have to go to a distant and unhealthy country. I fixed this wage for my garden without reference to the Act. The labourer also gets paid for overtime. I do not pay the coolie if he misses a *haziri*; but I give a reasonable amount of leave on full pay. I would recommend other planters to pay this wage; and they could afford to do it if they had not to pay contractors.

I have managed a zemindari for 20 years and I know that there is a considerable surplus population which could be removed without denuding the district; and if these people emigrated they would be better off. The Santals are a very prolific race in their own country. I am therefore in favour of opening up Assam as the natural outlet for the surplus Santal population. When there is a settled population in Assam the planters will have free labour at their doors.

The Santal has a profound distrust of the Bengali and the Bengali should not be allowed to have anything to do with recruiting; respectable and experienced Europeans should be appointed to superintend emigration; the younger men are often unsatisfactory. I would be willing to help a suitable man, and so would my colleagues.

People go freely to the Duars from this part, but if they are taken up on false pretences they easily return and have their revenge on their deceiver, who gets a thrashing.

I consider that a three-year contract is not too long, but I have the feeling that the Santals consider four years rather too much. They would willingly go for three years if they got land given them at the end.

I would not allow the managers to retain the power of arrest, but I would appoint selected planters honorary magistrates and empower them to issue warrants. The planter requires some means of enforcing the penal contract. The Santal, if properly treated, would not abscond.

I consider that Section 90 is very unsatisfactory; and it will tend to check emigration by continuing the existing distrust. I would let no one off the necessity of registering his coolies.

22ND MARCH 1906.

No. 100.—MR. C. L. WILKIN, *Manager, Hautley Tea Estate, Sibsagar District.*

I have been 8½ years in Assam. I came down to Dumka in 1903 to supervise recruitment by my garden sardars and I came down again in September last. In the present year I have worked under Section 90 of the Act for the first time. All my sardars are under Section 90. I have had 26 sardars, who have recruited 85 labourers up to date.

It is very difficult to get people to come forward for Assam from this district. Sardars get no one to listen to them except their own relations. With a European to superintend them, recruitment comes very expensive: the coolies will cost at least R70 landed on the garden, all expenses included.

The causes which render recruiting difficult, from what I can gather during my experience in several of the districts from which a great proportion of our labour is obtained, are mainly the five following:—

1. The general unpopularity of Assam which exists amongst all classes, even extending to Europeans.
2. The reputed unhealthiness of Assam.
3. The journey by water up to the tea districts. The idea of the steamer journey is repugnant to the emigrant.
4. The distance and isolation of Assam.
5. The fact of emigrants in the past remaining in the country either as labourers on the gardens or as settlers (after obtaining their release at the expiration of their contracts), such prolonged absence leading their relatives to suppose they have met their death.

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Minor reasons for the unpopularity of emigration are the following :—

6. All garden sardars who come down to recruit present a somewhat domineering attitude to those they would fain recruit.

7. This change of manner accompanied to a certain extent by change of speech—the sardar having picked up a certain amount of Assamese—tends to dissuade the peasant from going with the sardar.

8. Coolies who have resided on tea gardens against their wishes until the expiration of their contracts, return to their country only to abuse Assam ; this soon finds its way to the ears of intending emigrants and in the majority of cases carries sufficient weight to discourage or prevent them from going. There are certain people who hate discipline of any sort, and it is amongst this class that such persons are to be found.

9. In parts of Bengal another cause exists. Landholders and others do their utmost to retain the ryots in the country to employ them on their own cultivation. These people look upon Assam as a rival and do their best to give the country a bad name and concoct any yarn to dissuade people from emigrating.

10. In some of the reading books used in schools—at a Santal school in Dumka for instance—the youthful are taught, as soon as they are able to read, to look upon Assam as a " death trap " whence their ancestors have never returned. I quote from a little book in the Santal language by John Chandrai Marndi, Sub-Inspector of Santal Schools, Dumka :—

> " And they owing to their poverty are emigrating to Pandua, Baria, Assam and Cachar. And they go to work in the tea gardens, on the agreement of three years, but sometimes most of them do not return."

11. Discipline is known to prevail from the regulations controlling the recruitment of the labourer, and so long as the labourer remains on the garden. The instant a coolie enters a Court for the purpose of registration he places himself under control and he is a marked man thenceforth.

I think that to get over the existing difficulties there should be free emigration as well as emigration under contract under the Act. That is, people who are willing to leave their homes for good should be put under contract. Side by side with this, I would allow free emigration under Section 90, such as is in force for the Duars ; let people who wish to go out for work come up for the busy season, namely from May to October. These free labourers would do the hoeing. The permanent labour force could then devote their attention to the finer parts of the work, plucking and manufacture. Last year Section 90 coolies taken up from the Santal Pergannas for my garden were all free labourers. Many of them were allowed to come back this year as Section 90 sardars. But if any of these do not want to return to Assam, I have no hold over them, and I shall take no steps to get them to go back. So far as I am concerned, I would let all Section 90 coolies go up on the understanding that they can come back at the end of six months if they do not like the garden. The return fare of these temporary coolies should be paid by the garden. This we are now doing ; and in every way they receive the same privileges on the garden as if they were under the Act.

I admit that it would never pay to take labourers, who have cost R70 to recruit, up to Assam for six months only. But I want to establish a new connection and inaugurate a new system. Hitherto I have sent down to the recruiting districts sardars who have been long on the garden. They have been very unsuccessful. What I now want to try is to make people go back after they have seen the garden and so establish confidence among the people in the recruiting districts. I think it is a wrong principle to allow people to stay on on the garden and thus lose touch with their country. In all cases I would let people go back after they have served their term and I would pay their fare. I am of opinion that the idea which has hitherto prevailed of getting people to stay on at the expiry of their contracts without revisiting their country has been a mistake, specially in cases where there is a likelihood of their being able to procure new labour.

We never think of putting Section 90 coolies on contract unless they ask for it. They are taken up on the express understanding that they are free and that they can return at the end of 6 months, if they want to. They are encouraged in fact to return for recruiting purposes. I do not know what the ultimate fate of this scheme will be. But I think it contains the germs of success. The first thing necessary is to dispel prevailing distaste against emigration to Assam. I hope eventually to be able to dispense with having a European down here to supervise recruiting. At present the people will not place reliance on the word of a sardar ; they must have a European to deal with whose word they will take. I do not think it will be possible for a long time to get the sardar to travel by himself with his coolies, as ordinary third class passengers. He is too ignorant and would lose his way, and there are pit-falls in the shape of his coolies being taken away from him by somebody else. You must keep forwarding agencies, such as there are at present, and I do not think that you will ever get a better arrangement. There will thus always be some expense in addition to the railway fares of the coolies, in the shape of forwarding agents' fees.

I consider that the Act is still necessary both for the employer and the emigrant. It has a wholesome influence over the labourer; he works better and is under proper control.

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Without the Act you could not have a permanent labour force, which is necessary under any system which may be introduced. You must have such a force which can be turned on to any work that may have to be done. In order to maintain a permanent force side by side with a temporary one, you would have to make some difference in the attractions held out to the coolie. For instance, a common plan would be to pay off a man's debts here on condition that he went up under a contract. I do not think any distinction could be made on the garden; it would have to be in the district of recruitment in the shape of a bonus.

The abolition of the Act would in my opinion kill the arkati. No employer could consent to pay the price for free labour that would tempt the arkati to work. I do not consider that the abolition of the Act would of itself induce a ready flow of labour to Assam. It would take at least five years to dispel the present prejudice against Assam. Gardens that are hard up for labour might still agree to pay a price even to get free labourers, in the hope that a certain proportion of them would stay. These gardens might still give some employment to the arkati. But I consider that the arkati has his use as the pioneer of emigration in new districts, and I think you must keep him. I would retain the contractor's system under the Act. I do not approve of the free contracter.

People down here look upon Assam and Cachar as the same thing. I do not think that the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will hurt Assam. At present the competition of the Duars is felt in recruiting for Assam. But it will take some time for the Surma Valley to get on the same footing as the Duars.

I would strongly favour a scheme of colonization, preferably conducted by Government, for the settlement of Santals and other tribes in Assam. At present the majority of gardens in Assam offer people land for settlement. My garden gives each head of a family a bigah of land for every adult member. This only applies to labourers under agreement. I do not know why it is, but they do not seem to appreciate it as much as one would think they would do. No rent is charged by the garden. The plan has been a success as a means of keeping the coolie on the garden, but it has not been a great attraction to emigration.

My Section 90 coolies are produced before the magistrate at Dumka. In the Santal Pergannas this does not deter the emigrant, but elsewhere it does undoubtedly. There are several places where the officials are opposed to emigration. At Asansole coolies used to be severely cross-examined by the magistrate. There are police in undress uniform all along the line in Bankura on special duty for the purpose of detecting offences in connection with emigration. The sardar is allowed to purchase his ticket to Asansole, and is then questioned by the police to ascertain whether the coolies are not being taken away forcibly. In suspicious cases the sardar and his coolies are taken to the Police Inspector. I have given my sardars funds to enable them to avoid detention in this manner.

No. 101.—Mr. W. M. Thomson, *Sub-Divisional Officer, Dumka, Santal Pergannas.*

I have been in the Santal Pergannas for over five years; before that I was Sub-Divisional Officer of Rampur Hat for about nine months. I have also served at Raniganj for six months and for two years at Giridih and three years in Chaibassa. I consider that recruiting abuses have diminished under Act VI, but the fact that Raniganj and Birbhum have not been notified under Section 3 has to a considerable extent nullified the advantages of the Act.

I would not say that Assam is unpopular in the recruiting districts, but that the systems of recruitment which have been followed are unpopular. If recruiting abuses are put down, I think that the supply of labour will gradually increase. There are more people in the Santal Pergannas than can be supported in the district. Duars recruiting is at present the chief rival of Assam; the Duars is preferred because there is no contract; people go there for the season and nothing more. I recommend the Assam planter, if he wants more labour, to abandon the four years' contract and take coolies for a year at a time, and to help them with funds to return at the end of the year. I believe that 9 men out of 10 who come home under this arrangement would revisit the garden. I think that they would go for the present wage; I do not consider that the tea-garden coolie is underpaid. The Superintendent of the Chittagong Hill Tracts takes coolies from Dumka every year at a wage of R6 or R7; they stay for a year. I had many men ready to go for reclamation work in the Sunderbunds at R8 and R10. The Santal does not like to place his women on contract, and this is why women go freely to the Duars.

In Dumka Section 90 sardars produce their coolies before the magistrate; they prefer to do so as they consider it is more binding on the coolie. The local agent thinks it prevents desertion.

I consider that there is no danger in Section 90 being freely worked, with the sardars merely reporting the names of the coolies taken by them. I should hesitate, however, about allowing Section 90 to be worked in Singhbhum or anywhere where I found that the sardars were cunning. In Chaibassa there was a large admixture of Native Christians among the sardars. I have not been in Singhbhum since Act VI of 1901 came into force. Any system of sardari recruiting there will require watching.

I would advise the Assam planter to abolish every form of contract and work as the Duars gardens do. An unwilling recruit generally manages to communicate with his home; and this makes Assam unpopular in the recruiting districts. Unless the planter is willing to

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forego every form of contract I would not relax control over recruiting. If the Act is withdrawn from Cachar alone, nothing can prevent men nominally recruiting for Cachar and then taking their coolies up to Assam; it is only the supervision of the Jalpaiguri planters which prevents the Duars sardars playing this trick; and as it is, I have complaints of Duars sardars selling coolies to Assam contractors. Santals would be likely to go to take up Government waste land in Assam; but they would probably stay on the land and not work on the tea gardens. The Bengali agricultural population here have become so well-to-do that they employ hired labour to cultivate for them and this forms a growing demand on the labour supply.

If the planter will not forego every form of contract he will not get labour, and it will be impossible to dispense with the present form of recruitment. If there were no agreement I do not think any one would pay enough for free labour to make it worth the while of the arkati to work; the arkati is the creation of the contract system. I believe that there would be an immediate and sufficient supply of labour if the Act and all agreements were abolished.

I have nothing to say against the present sardari recruiting in Dumka, and I am quite willing to see Section 90 (*g*) replaced. I have never had to release a woman from the sardari depot, and only 4 or 5 from the contractor's depot, but I often effect arrangements with their relations which prevents any interference with the emigrants afterwards. I do not think that these enquiries deter other people from emigrating. If the enquiries now made at Dumka about single women were made through the regular police, it would tend to hamper recruiting and there would be a good deal of bleeding.

I do not think it would pay the planter to have the contractor abolished, but under the present law it is a very expensive system. The recruiter's license fee should be reduced to R1, or it would be sufficient to take an eight-anna stamp on the application for the license.

If the Act is retained, Raniganj and Birbhum must be notified under Section 3.

Midnapur.

MIDNAPUR, 26TH MARCH 1906.

No. 102.—BABU BHUBANESHWAR MITRA, *Midnapur.*

I am a zemindar and medical practitioner. Under the present system of free recruiting for Assam the number of depots in this district has increased, and as there is no registration the emigrants are not told fairly what pay they will be able to earn, and many of them have no idea of where they are really going; they only find out when they get to Dhubri. I would have all coolies registered locally; recruitment should be controlled and the coolies told fully what they are going to work at and earn. Labourers formerly earned 10 or 12 pice in Midnapur, but wages have now risen to 14 pice or 4 annas a day, and more still can be earned on the railway. Recruitment by garden sardars is fair and above board, a man comes from the garden and takes up his own friends; but arkatis live by deception. The feeling about Assam among the lower orders is that it is a distant country and when they go to a tea garden they are in a manner imprisoned there. Educated people call it the slave trade in another form.

About six months ago a maid-servant of mine disappeared and her mother and husband came to me; I told them to visit the depots; they saw her sitting outside one and called to her, but she went inside. Then they came to me and I went to the police and had to pay the carriage fare of a police officer before he went to the depot; at the depot there was no trace of the woman and her name was not in the register; she has never been heard of since.

No. 103.—MR. MAHOMED SHAMSUZZOHA, *Deputy Collector, Midnapur.*

All recruitment for Assam in this district is carried on under Section 92 of Act VI of 1901. There were licensed contractors working up till 1904. They recruited 99 persons in 1901, 131 in 1902, 66 in 1903 and only 2 in 1904. From an examination of the register of places of accommodation I find that a free contractor, named F. W. Scott, first started work about September 1903. In the following year, a number of free depots sprang up. Some worked only for a short time, but some 12 depots were opened in 1904. At the present time there are 10 depots worked by free contractors, all except 2 being situated at Khargpur; there is also the depot of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association which works through sardars under Section 92.

The first record of Section 92 emigration is for the year 1902-03, when only the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association depot was open. 175 labourers and 131 dependants were recruited in this year. For the succeeding two years the figures are as follows :—

Year.	Tea Districts Labour Supply Association.			Free Contractors.		
	Labourers.	Dependants.	Total.	Labourers.	Dependants.	Total.
1903-04	382	218	600	300	34	334
1904-05	469	252	721	1,268	65	1,333

I have not had sufficient experience of the district to say where the free contractors principally get the labour which they recruit. There were 10 prosecutions in 1904 and 9 in 1905 against recruiters for offences under Section 363, Indian Penal Code, and Section 164 of Act VI. There is, I have heard, much fraud practised by the recruiters in inducing people to go to Assam, but only a few cases come to light. I have only, however, been four months in the district and cannot speak from personal knowledge.

No. 104.—Mr. T. J. LeMarchand, *Free Contractor, Khargpur.*

I have a free depot at Khargpur, which was opened about 2 years ago. I have also places of accommodation at other places in the Midnapur district. Before starting recruiting on my own account, I was a Selecting Agent at Purulia for six months.

For the last two years I have recruited on an average 30 coolies a month. They are generally people of this or the neighbouring districts or Native States. I have no regular establishment of recruiters, and take a coolie from any one who brings him in. I get paid for the labourers when they are delivered on the garden and after they have executed contracts there. Labourers who arrive on the garden and refuse to give contracts, are returned to me and I have to pay their expenses from Assam back to their homes. Very few, probably not more than 2 per cent., are returned for refusal to execute contracts. The contracts are under Act VI. I only send labourers to the Assam Valley. I get an average of ₹115 to ₹120 per coolie, which is the value at Khargpur. The manager pays the expenses from Khargpur to the garden. There is no selecting agent here, coolies are sent up subject to the manager's approval. I pay my recruiters ₹60 or ₹70 per labourer. Occasionally a man comes in of his own accord, and asks for his commission. I pay such persons ₹40 or over, but the average would be about ₹40. If the coolie does not ask for money, I pay him nothing. The people who ask for their own commission in this way are men who have been up in Assam before. I have never heard of people taking commission in this way and deserting after reaching the garden. The castes which I generally get are Bhumij and Bagals. They are Midnapur people. I also get a few Santals from Midnapur but no Kols. I take persons from other districts who come to me, irrespective of their place of birth. I get a few persons of this class from Chota Nagpur, mostly from Singhbhum. They are generally people who are running away from their creditors.

I do not think that emigration to Assam is very popular. There is a general complaint that people do not return and do not answer letters. I have on several occasions given people the addresses of the gardens to which their relatives have been sent, but have been told that no reply was received. The long journey up also is a deterrent to emigration. In this district the current rate of wages is 2 annas per day, but it is from 4 to 8 annas at Khargpur. If people are willing to go to Assam on ₹5 per month when they can get 4 to 8 annas a day at home, I presume that the recruiters and sardars hold out inducements to them in order to tempt them to go. They say it is a good country and that there is any amount of money to be made there. People also see the sardars, who get large advances, flush of money, so they believe their statements.

If this district were notified under Section 3, it would affect my recruiting. I should probably get only about half as many emigrants as I do at present. They fear being hauled up in court and questioned and cross-examined. I believe also that some would be disillusioned by hearing from the magistrate the real terms of service in Assam. Registration in the case of a good many single women would be refused. I get many more females than males. These women emigrate owing to domestic troubles. Very few dependants accompany the labourers whom I send up. The new Bengal Rule 224 has not affected my work.

Before emigrants leave here they understand that they have to give agreements on arrival at the garden. I do not think that the fact that they have to enter into contracts in Assam deters people, and I do not consider that I could get more people if there were no contracts.

I am of opinion that if Act VI were abolished more labour would be obtained for Assam. It would not, however, affect this district where there is free recruiting.

In Native States the Rajas are opposed to recruiting. If they catch a recruiter they put him in jail. The sardars are generally the victims, as their fine clothes render them conspicuous.

27th March 1906.

(Messrs. Robertson and Gordon and Captain Kennedy *present.*)

No. 105.—Babu Jamini Mohan Mitra, *Deputy Magistrate, Midnapur.*

I have served in the Midnapur district for the last 2½ years.

Emigration to Assam is unpopular in this district. The reasons are that emigrants are paid less in Assam than they can earn here, and that they cannot return to their country when they want. The people who do come back from Assam say that the work there is very hard and that they are treated unkindly. I have not heard in what respects labourers

Midnapur. on the tea gardens are unkindly treated. People from this district generally emigrate to Assam as a last resource. It is, for instance, a common thing for widows who have gone wrong to seek a refuge in Assam in order to avoid social excommunication. The fact is that the supply of labour in this district is not equal to the demand. The opening of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway has created a great demand for labour. Mr. Bailey, Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Railway works at Khargpur, told me recently that he could not get sufficient unskilled labour locally, and asked me if I could help him to get 500 coolies. The Railway pays from 4 to 6 annas a day for ordinary unskilled labour. Recently, also work in the mills at Calcutta has become popular, and a number of labourers go to work in the Sunderbunds. I know that a contractor about 6 months ago took 2,000 labourers from the south of this district to the Sunderbunds, where they work for a few months and then return. They receive 3 annas a day, and are provided with huts and receive free medical attendance. From the west of the district, where the people are poorest and from whence most of the Assam emigrants are recruited, large numbers of emigrants go to Hooghly and Burdwan about harvest time to reap the crops, and return after the harvesting season is over. These people are mostly Santals. They are not likely to emigrate to Assam as there is plenty of unreclaimed land in that quarter, and they get ample employment locally. Speaking generally, wages have risen all over the district within the last three or four years. Men used to get 1½ annas and women 1 anna a day, whereas now men ordinarily earn not less than 3 annas and women 2 annas a day, but during the sowing and harvesting seasons a man's earnings are 3½ annas and those of a woman 2¼ annas a day, in addition to another ½ pice for refreshments.

To attract labourers to Assam, I would recommend the grant of a higher wage, say ₹8 for men and ₹6 for women, and of leave to return to their homes when they desire to do so. I would give the labourer a holiday of one month every year in his own country, and I think that he would willingly return to Assam. People from this district very soon get homesick.

I have mentioned that the only people who go willingly to Assam are those who emigrate as a last resource. In addition, many others, and these form by far the largest proportion of the emigrants, are taken away by specious and often false inducements. I have known of cases where coolies have been taken away from their homes by recruiters on the pretence of seeing the Kalighat at Calcutta or of obtaining employment there, and then have been sent up to Assam. At the depots coolies are very well treated. They are given good food and fine clothes and the men and women are paired off in couples. About two months ago I heard of a contractor here going out to an Inspection bungalow near a Santal village. He had with him a gramophone and four women. In the evening he gathered a large number of Santals and treated them to a gramophone entertainment. This with the allurements of the ladies, I was told, obtained him 2 or 3 cart-loads of Santals, who were taken in to Khargpur to his depot. Young women are decoyed away on the promise of being kept as mistresses and are then packed off to Assam. I recorded evidence under Section 512, Criminal Procedure Code, the other day in a case of this kind, in which a recruiter had absconded after taking away a girl of 14 on a pretence of this nature. I maintain that a great deal of this goes on under the existing system. Many people are also taken from Manbhum, Singhbhum and the neighbouring districts, by the Khargpur contractors who are specially active. I think that it is most necessary that recruitment in this district should be brought under Government control in order to put a stop to the abuses which are now prevalent.

No. 106.—Mr. M. K. Deb, I.C.S., *Joint Magistrate, Midnapur.*

I have been six months in the Midnapur district. I consider that a great deal of deceit and oppression is used in recruiting for Assam in this district. I receive numerous complaints about the disappearance of persons who are alleged to have been taken away for Assam. These complaints are sent to the police for enquiry, and the almost invariable report is that there is no trace in the depots of the person said to have been abducted. Sometimes letters are received by the relatives of such persons from Assam, telling them that they have been taken to the tea gardens. As a rule the letters give no address; the coolie does not know where he is and cannot give the name of the district to which he has been taken. Such letters are often filed before me, but it is generally impossible to take any action, as there are no particulars which would lead to the missing person being traced. As a matter of fact, therefore, the number of cases brought to trial are very few, almost *nil*. It is only when the recruiter is actually caught taking a person away that there is any chance of instituting a prosecution. The person has come to discover that he or she is not being taken to the place which had been agreed upon, and then begins to cry out. This brings people to the rescue and the victim is saved. If it happens to be a minor who is thus taken away the police take up the case, otherwise they cannot interfere.

I think there is a very great deal of this kind of thing going on. The depots take any person that any outsider brings in and pay him well for his trouble. Sometimes the depot agents fight over the coolie. There was a case of this kind only the other day in Court. There are certain depots licensed by the magistrate. I always find these empty when I go to inspect them. The coolies are kept in various outside places which nobody knows of

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except the recruiters. The regular plan is to send the coolie up under an assumed name. One hardly ever finds a name in a contractor's register which can be recognised. I think in only one case since I came here has a person been traced in the depot registers, although certainly over a hundred enquiries had been made. I should characterise the whole system of recruitment by free contractors as at present practised as absolutely fraudulent. About a month ago there was an industrial exhibition at Midnapur. This gave a good crop of coolies to the contractors, as people were brought from the villages on the pretence of seeing the exhibition. I do not imagine that many of them even saw the exhibition before going to the depots. There is a large traffic carried on in smuggling coolies from the forbidden districts to Midnapur, as recruitment here is free.

I consider that Government should put a stop to what is going on. The coolies are sold as chattels, and there is regular outbidding by the contractors against one another to purchase a good coolie.

Most of the cases about which complaints are made concern young women. A woman is more easily duped than a man and a promise to take her to a *mela* or a *jatra* is frequently enough to entice a woman away.

There have been several cases in which women have been decoyed from other districts, but have been discovered before being sent to Assam. A case is instituted in the district whence the woman was taken, and she is sent back there as a witness. On the way back she often disappears, having been again got hold of by the dêpot people. I have a case at present on my file under Section 363 Indian Penal Code, in which a young woman was abducted from Manbhum. The enquiry is being held here, in order to prevent the woman disappearing.

If the Deputy Magistrate has said that here were ten prosecutions in 1904 and 9 in 1905, the figures refer only to cases actually brought to trial. There are hundreds of other cases which have not been traced.

No. 107.—Babu Kunj Behari Mitra, *Sub-Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Midnapur.*

I have been in this district for 9 years. 286 sardars have come down from the gardens this year, and they have recruited up to date 300 adults and 120 dependants. The sardars, as can be seen from the register which I produce, generally take away their family relations. There are many instances in which they have taken away whole families. I have strict orders to examine coolies, so as to make certain they are perfectly willing to emigrate. In some cases I have let coolies go, when guardians have come and said they did not want them to leave. There has, in 9 years, only been one prosecution of a sardar. He was fined for taking his coolies by a wrong route, but I think the decision of the magistrate was wrong.

About 10 per cent. of the sardars abscond. Four-fifths of the absconders are persons who have been originally recruited by contractors. The free recruiters working in this district interfere with my sardars and try to buy their coolies from them. My sardars often tell me of this.

No. 108.—Mr. B. C. Gregson, *Part Proprietor, Midnapur Zemindari Company, Midnapur.*

I have been in this district for 33 years. Our properties in Midnapur are chiefly situated in the north and west of the district. Recruiting for Assam goes on to a limited extent in these parts. There is ample labour available in the locality to cultivate the land and I do not look with disfavour on the recruitment that goes on. The people chiefly consist of Santals, Kurmis and Bhumij. These people might be well off, but they are very improvident. Most of the local labour is connected with agriculture, as there is no other business there now. The labourers are generally paid in kind. During the last six or eight years there has been a distinct tendency for wages to rise, due to railways having drawn off a certain amount of the surplus labour for earth-work, etc. The ordinary daily wage in a village is from 2 to 2½ annas for a man and 6 pice for a woman. At certain seasons of the year the surplus labour moves to the south and east of the district for paddy cutting. The people who go are generally away for a couple of months; they are paid in kind and their earnings are good, approximating sometimes to as much as 8 annas per diem. Up to five years ago there was a very considerable extent of indigo cultivation in this part of the district. This has now completely stopped, and since this has taken place the tendency for labourers to go to Calcutta for work in the docks, etc., has largely increased.

I am constantly receiving complaints of the methods employed by recruiters to get people to go to Assam. Men are plied with drink and got to leave their homes, but the chief cause of the trouble is the way in which young women and girls are enticed away. It is about the latter that I chiefly hear. I consider the methods employed to be extremely reprehensible, but at the same time it is fair to say that the coolie is himself not free from blame, as he often goes away with the arkati so as to avoid paying his debts. In stating as above I refer to the arkati, and not to the sardar, whose methods of recruitment are quite constitutional. The latter comes down and goes away with his own people. I think that as a check on the malpractices of the arkati, emigrants should be registered before a magistrate prior to their removal from the district. I consider that the same methods which are adopted in Manbhum and Singhbhum should be employed in Midnapur. As a matter of practice the recruiters pitch

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their tents on the borders of the Manbhum and Singhbhum districts, and make a regular trade of bringing coolies across from these areas, as Midnapur is an easier district for them to take their coolies out of. I should say that a great proportion of the coolies sent from Midnapur really come from these districts originally. I do not think that any coolie goes to Assam to better his position. He is either enticed away by specious promises or absconds to avoid his creditors or some other incubus. On the other hand the coolie who goes for rice cutting or earth-work does so readily, leaving his family behind and remitting money to them.

I think that one great deterrent to emigration to Assam is that the coolie is bound for a certain number of years. This is a great impediment, and if it could be got over and the coolie could still look upon this as his home, he would go to Assam just as readily as he goes to other places. Another objection to Assam is that under the arkati system no one knows his destination, and families, even husbands and wives, are often separated and sent to different gardens. It would be a great advantage if whole families, or people who come from the same village, were sent up together to the same garden and allowed to live together there.

The part of the country which I am connected with covers 1,200 square miles, and comprises the more jungly portion of the district. It is the principal recruiting ground for Assam, but the number of persons who emigrate is really comparatively small. Whatever the figures for emigration from Midnapur may be, I am convinced you will find that the greater number of the emigrants are really people who have no connection with the district but are brought from outside.

The Committee examined the register maintained under Bengal Government Rule 224, for the free contractor's depot of Messrs. Sinclair & Co. The agent was unwell and could not attend. The following abstract shows the district of residence of the emigrants who passed through the depot from August 1905 to March 1906 :—

Place of residence.	Number of Emigrants.
Midnapur	56
Orissa	20
Gurjat Mahals	87
Chota Nagpur Native States	88
Bankura and Burdwan districts	37
Closed districts	18
Total	306

KHARGPUR, 27TH MARCH 1906.

(MESSRS. BOMPAS AND MILNE *present*).

No. 109.—MR. K. W. DIGBY, *District Engineer, Bengal-Nagpur Railway, Khargpur.*

There have been very extensive building operations in Khargpur for the last ten years, but in another year or two these will nearly come to an end. Chhattisgarhi labourers have hitherto been largely employed, but at present they are mostly engaged in the brick-fields and on monthly wages as gangmen, etc. The Santal will not work for a monthly wage as he does not wish to attend regularly every day. Most of the coolies now employed on buildings are Santals, most of them come from the direction of Sini.

There will not be a large permanent demand for unskilled Central Provinces labour here, but many Chhattisgarhis who were attracted to Khargpur have now learnt to go on further to Calcutta, where they load coal, etc.

We pay contractors here 4 annas for a man and 3 annas for a woman coolie, and they say that they make no profit out of this. Monthly wages for coolies employed in keeping the roads in order are ₹7 for a man and ₹5 for a woman. We are trying to get in Uriyas in place of Chhattisgarhis as gangmen, but the Uriya who is engaged on ₹7 or ₹8 soon finds that he can get ₹10 or ₹12 in Calcutta and moves on there. The nearer to Calcutta the higher wages are; near Calcutta a gangman gets ₹10 and the wage sinks by 8 annas every 10 miles or so till it is ₹6-8 south of Khargpur.

No. 110.—BABU R. D. MUKHERJI, *Khargpur.*

I have been a doctor on a tea garden for 22 years and have now been sent down by my employers, the Scottish Assam Tea Company, to recruit labour. I am taking coolies direct from the arkati, paying ₹60 or ₹70 for a first class coolie. My pay is ₹100 a month and I receive ₹5 commission on each coolie. I have despatched 35 coolies since I began seven weeks ago. This system eliminates the contractor's profit and pays the garden well. The manager can also trust me not to misdescribe coolies as the contractor does. I had no connection among the arkatis, but the arkati prefers to bring his coolie to any one who will pay him promptly; I pay directly I hear that the coolie has reached Chandpur. I forward my coolies through Messrs. Logan and Leslie. I have an advantage over the contractors, who cannot pay the arkati till the coolie has been approved on the garden.

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In my opinion there will always be difficulty about labour until Assam adopts the Duars free system. The feeling here is that no one ever comes back from Assam. I could get 100 coolies in a week on a one year's contract if they were allowed to return at the end. Coolies should be free or on a six months' or one year's contract. The healthy coolie can stand the climate of Assam for a year, but after that it tells on his constitution. A coolie on a year's contract would work hard and try to save money; but when a man is put on a four years' contract, he loses heart and feels that he will never go home. So he does not try to save, spends his money on drink and does as little work as he can.

I do not approve of having free recruiting allowed in some parts and not in others. The system should be uniform throughout the recruiting districts. At present smuggling is encouraged; if a woman cannot be registered at Sambalpur she is brought down to Khargpur, and sent off to Assam from there. The arkati is capable of any villainy, he can turn day into night and night into day.

To induce free coolies to stay on the garden, planters will have to raise the wages and pay all coolies at the rates now paid to temporary Cachari labour. There is plenty of Cachari labour available in Assam at R6 or R7 a month. The Assam planter will not pay his coolies enough to enable them to save, because he is afraid that if they save money they will go and live in the bastis and take up cultivation. The Duars planter is quite willing that his coolies should save.

Labour in Assam would be much more popular if there were no contract. The coolies hate being chowkidared as they are. I have known coolies who tried to abscond and were arrested, given a cuff on the ear and made to stand on a box for the other coolies to laugh at. When a garden is short of labour, coolies have to work when they are not feeling well. If a coolie is sent to me and has no fever on him I pass him for work even though he may have had fever the night before. He goes out to work and probably makes himself really ill. If the coolie were free, he would take better care of himself and keep his health.

The question of giving coolies land is a difficult one. If Government colonized on a larger scale it would benefit the planter. Coolies much prefer to hold land from Government to holding it under a garden manager. I have heard them talking about this among themselves. I do not approve of Government letting out land to planters for settlement with coolies. Government should deal direct with the cultivator. Where labourers have settled in bastis, the manager should show himself friendly to them, and give them medicines, etc. At present when a coolie has escaped from a garden to a basti, he is afraid to meet the garden manager for some time.

I am aware that contractors' coolies are now being passed off as sardari coolies.

NOTE.—The Committee have since ascertained that the witness is the "doctor Babu" referred to in the evidence of the Deputy Commissioner of Bilaspur (No. 62) as having brought coolies from an unlicensed contractor and sent them up as Section 90 sardari coolies. His employers had, it is understood, dispensed with his services.

Messrs. Bompas and Milne visited the following free depots at Khargpur.

Ray & Co.—A new place passed on 21st February 1906. Only 6 coolies, 5 of whom were women, had passed through this place.

T. J. LeMarchand.—417 coolies had passed through since July 1905, of whom 203 were women. The coolies came mostly from Native States, especially Raigarh. The register did not show recruiting in closed districts.

Sinclair & Co.—Have a free depot at Midnapur and had just opened a rest house at Khargpur.

Pandit Ram.—One hundred and fifty-seven coolies had passed through since July 1905, mostly from the Chota Nagpur Native States. The register did not show recruiting from closed districts.

Jwala Din Dube.—Only 35 coolies had passed through since September 1905, mostly from Native States.

J. Warren.—Section 92 depot for the Assam Railways and Trading Company. Sent up 13 coolies, 9 of whom were women, since September 1905, mostly for tea garden work.

The Assistant Superintendent of Emigration, who draws R33 a month, is the officer appointed to inspect the depot registers under Rule 224.

BALASORE, 28TH MARCH 1906.

Balasore.

No. 111.—MOULVI ABDUS SALAM, *Officiating Magistrate and Collector, Balasore.*

I have been about nine months in Balasore as Deputy Collector and Magistrate. I am at present in charge of the district. There are two licensed sub-contractors in the district. The Tea Districts Labour Supply Association have an agency here working under Section 92.

Balasore. There are two free contractors, who opened in January of the present year. The numbers who have gone to Assam have been as follows, in the past five years :—

Year.	Chapter III.			Section 92.
	Labourers.	Dependants.	Total.	Labourers and Dependants.
1901-02	126	20	146	117
1902-03	291	33	324	635
1903-04	243	43	286	347
1904-05	128	22	150	450
1905-06 (up to date).	79	5	84	271

The figures shown under Section 92 refer only to sardari recruiting until the present year. Out of 271 sent this year, 5 persons have been recruited by one free contractor.

Most of the emigrants come from the Tributary Mahals and are aboriginals. The Chiefs of the States objected to recruiting for Assam in their territories, and it has been stopped in the three States of Moharbhanj, Nilgiri and Keonjhar which are under the Magistrate of Balasore as Assistant Superintendent. When enquiries are made, the usual answer is that the Native State emigrant has come to the British district in search of work and has not been recruited in the Native State. Very few of the people of Balasore itself ever go to Assam. There is plenty of work available owing to the opening of the Railway, and there is no desire to go to such a distant place as Assam. I do not consider that there is much prospect of increased emigration to the tea gardens except in years of scarcity when people cannot get work.

Under Bengal Rule 224 the magistrate merely initials the entries in the register which is kept up for recruitment under Section 92. The Government has recently held that the rule does not empower the magistrate to order the production of the emigrants before him, and that if he thinks it necessary to verify the entries made in the register, he should arrange to visit the place of accommodation, but that it is not necessary in all cases to verify the register which is merely intended as a check upon fraudulent recruiting. The opinion of District Magistrates has, however, been called for as to whether the rule should be amended so as to provide for the production of emigrants before the magistrate, but meantime the rule as it stands is to be observed. In this district it has not been customary to inspect the emigrants prior to despatch to the labour districts.

No. 112.—Raja Baikuntha Nath De Bahadur, *Balasore.*

I have zemindaries in Balasore, Cuttack and Midnapur. I can state to the Committee what I have heard from my tenants about emigration to Assam, and what my own impressions are. The wage of a day-labourer is 3 annas at head-quarters and 2½ annas in the interior of the district. For a woman the wage is 2 or 3 pice less. The first thing that strikes me is that the wage offered in Assam is not sufficient, especially as commodities are dearer there. The coolie in this district can get his rice at an average price of R2-8 a maund. I do not think that Assam should offer a less wage than R6 or R7 for a man and R5 for a woman. In my opinion this wage would attract labour from here. From Balasore people go to Calcutta and earn good wages there. But these are of a higher class than the people who would go to Assam. The latter are aborigines or of mixed aboriginal descent; they have no other occupation than serving as day-labourers. There are very many of them in Balasore, and especially in Cuttack and the Gurjat Mahals.

The general belief is that the labourer in Assam has to work much harder than he does here. People who have been to the tea gardens say they have to commence work at 6 A.M. and work till 5 P.M., with one hour for meals, which is quite insufficient. Wages are cut for even a few minutes late attendance. When the coolie gets sick and goes to hospital, he gets only diet allowance, which is merely sufficient for his actual food and gives him nothing for extras. If the illness continues, the coolie is allowed to leave the garden, but once he gets better, he is brought back to the garden and compelled to work. There is no check on drinking in Assam such as there is here in the shape of the disapproval of their masters and their caste people, and the coolies spend most of their earnings in the liquor shop. The coolie has also difficulty in getting redress, when he makes a complaint. It is further said that corporal punishment is inflicted on the coolies for petty offences. The labourers are forced to work during the heat of the day, and in the rains they have to go on working in their wet clothes and this affects their health. Here the ordinary custom is to have two meals a day. In Assam there is time only for one meal a day. After returning from work, a coolie is sometimes put on to pull a punkah. I have met only two people who has returned from Assam, and I have also

conversed with a hospital assistant who had served there. They have told me as above, and I have also gathered similar information from people in the interior of the district. The two returned coolies gave me a very bad account of their treatment in Assam.

I think, if remedies were found for the objections which I have stated and if the penal contract were abolished, the poorer classes to whom I have already referred, would be quite willing to go to Assam. They want to go out to earn some money. Thousands of people go to the Sunderbunds for the rice harvest every year, but they stay only two months. They get 6 annas a day besides food. I would suggest that the planters take coolies up for one year only and treat them well, and they will then stay on of their own accord. My impression is that unless they are harshly treated, they will not want to return to their country. The Uriya has no objection to leaving his home for a long period, provided he is comfortable. I think the Uriya coolie might take up his family and settle in Assam. But he is very timid and must be well treated in order to get him attached to his new surroundings.

A grant of land by Government on easy terms would be a great inducement to the Uriya to settle in Assam. I do not think that a grant of land by the gardens would have the same effect, as the settler would consider himself tied to the garden. If he wanted to leave the garden, he would be ejected from his land. In my opinion many thousands would go up from this country if they were offered land. I should be perfectly prepared to see colonization on a considerable scale from here to Assam. Even the grazing lands are now being brought under cultivation, and some outlet is undoubtedly wanted for the population.

I am much more in favour of garden sardar recruitment than of recruitment through contractors working with recruiters. People are induced by the recruiters to go to Assam by specious promises, and when they get there, they write back that the place is very different from what had been told them. I consider that Government control over recruitment is certainly required.

I have been told that coolies can earn extra for overtime on the gardens in the plucking season. But no one considers this. Everybody thinks the pay in Assam is only R5. The opening of the railway has greatly improved the condition of the working classes here and wages have also increased. There has been a rise of quite 25 per cent. in the last 8 years on this account.

No. 113.—Mr. M. Martin, *Licensed Sub-Contractor, Balasore.*

I am sub-agent for Mr. Mackertich of Calcutta. I have been about 10 years in the Assam recruiting business at Raniganj, Purulia, Chaibassa and Balasore.

Recruiting prospects for Assam in this district are now-a-days bad. Four or five years ago I used to send up about 50 coolies a month for the six or seven months of the recruiting season, whereas now I only send 5 or 6. Last year I only obtained 60 emigrants here.

The reason for this is that for the last three years the Chiefs of the Gurjat Mahals do not allow recruiting in their territories. If a Native State coolie is found in a British district and is willing to go to Assam, we recruit him and he is registered here. In the case of single women enquiries are conducted through the police, and these are very troublesome. People of this district are afraid to go to Assam. They are told that if they go there they will die. I have also known coolies to object to the four years' contract; it is too long. A man can earn from 4 to 5 rupees a month here, so the people think that the pay offered in Assam is somewhat small considering the long distance they have to go. If improvements were made in these respects more people would emigrate.

I have no objection to the Act being retained if Section 34 were modified; the provisions of the latter section are at present too severe.

No. 114.—Dr. P. A. Rigby, *Civil Surgeon, Balasore.*

I was travelling Superintendent of Emigration for two years.

I have formed no opinion as to why the supply of labour for Assam is insufficient. I do not approve of free recruiting by arkatis; the coolie is frequently taken away on false pretences and then cannot be traced. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a *bonâ fide* free emigrant under the free contractor's system; facts are always misrepresented to the emigrant. I have no complaint to make against the sardari recruiting in this district. I think that there should be some record kept of all coolies removed by garden sardars and recruiters from any district, so that the coolie can be traced if necessary. The licensed contractors in Balasore apparently make more money than the numbers of coolies shown in their registers would account for; and presumably they work outside their license as well as in accordance with it. As regards the working of the law much depends on the idiosyncracy of the registering officer; an officer who is adverse can undoubtedly check emigration by delaying coolies for unreasonable enquiries.

I look on the contract as a protection both to the coolie and the employer. I do not think that the emigrant cares anything about the contract, as he does not know what he is going for till he arrives on the garden.

Cuttack.

CUTTACK, 29TH MARCH 1906.

No. 115.—MR. S. MACLEOD SMITH, *Deputy Collector and Magistrate, Cuttack.*

I have been in this district for three years. There is one licensed contractor's depot, one free contractor's, and one place of accommodation belonging to the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. I have been the depot inspecting officer for the past year. I regularly visit the depots before a batch of Section 92 coolies is sent off, and verify the entries in the register by asking the coolie's name and address, and whether he or she is willing to emigrate. About two months ago I found 5 persons out of about 50 in one depot, who told me they had been brought from the Gurjat States to work at Cuttack, and objected to going to Assam. I released them. I do not remember having found any other instances of unwilling coolies.

Nearly all the coolies sent from Cuttack come from the Gurjat States. I understand that the Chiefs have closed their States to recruiting, but it goes on all the same. Very few coolies are got from the British district. The reason is that there is no inducement for a native of this district to go to Assam. He can earn as much down here as Assam offers him. An ordinary labourer can almost everywhere earn 3 annas a day. The general idea is that R5 to R6 is all that the coolie can make in Assam, and that is all he is told when he is registered. The coolie is not told, and he does not know, that he can earn extra wages for overtime. I consider that Assam will not get labour from this district until it offers a better wage. There are plenty of people who would go to Assam if better prospects were offered and if they knew the true facts. At present Assam is unpopular for other reasons besides the inadequate wage. One reason is the deception that is practised in recruitment, people being taken away from their homes on the pretence of finding work locally. There is also the belief that the coolie is not well treated on the gardens; it is generally supposed that a man can get thrashed if he is found fault with. I have not myself heard emigrants object to the term of contract, but influential men here have told me that it is disliked as the emigrant is not free to return when he wants to, and very few ever come back from Assam. The people who suffer by reason of emigration are the landowners and mahajans, whose tenants and debtors abscond without paying what they owe. These men are influential in their villages and they give emigration a bad name.

The only suggestions I have to make for inducing more people to go to Assam are to pay the labourer a better wage and reduce the term of his contract to at most three years, allowing him to return to his country at the end of that time. I think it would be a good plan also to take some influential men from different villages up to Assam and let them see the conditions there. If they formed a favourable impression, it would help emigration. People who have gone to Assam should be encouraged to write to their relatives at home, so as to let the latter know how they are getting on. I would also circulate vernacular leaflets in the villages setting forth the facts about Assam.

No. 116.—MR. J. A. J. MACMILLAN, *Licensed Sub-Contractor, Cuttack.*

I have been working here as a licensed sub-contractor since 1902, and have been in the recruiting business for the last 13 years in the Central Provinces, Chota Nagpur and Bengal.

I supervise work in the whole of Orissa for Mr. Mackertich, junior. From Cuttack district alone we have despatched—

from November	1902 to March	1904	. . . . .	382 souls.
„ April	1904 „ „	1905	. . . . .	186 „
„ „	1905 „ „	1906	. . . . .	509 „

Most of these emigrants come from the Orissa Native States. I think that the supply of labour for Assam has decreased because the rules are too stringent; I refer particularly to the closing of the Native States to recruiting. I could obtain the consent of the Native Chiefs to my recruiting if they were not confirmed in their refusal by the attitude of the officers of Government. I believe that I could obtain 2,000 coolies a month from the Native States if I were not interfered with. But this could not go on unless the emigrants were satisfied with their condition on the garden and also allowed to return home freely. Speaking generally, the emigrants would rather go for two or three years than four. I would not put them on a four-year contract to begin with. My experience of recruiting is that the emigrant does not know whether he is going to Assam or to England. People are very ready to leave the Orissa States now because they have a hard time of it at home; the classes suspected of crime are at present made all to sleep in one block of houses and they resent this. The Cuttack man does not emigrate to Assam partly because he is not well treated on the garden; he is so lazy that he has to be kicked to work. Managers do not like him because his health breaks down.

In Midnapur *junglis* are willing to move, and if taken to a magistrate and told by him that they will return in one or two years—not more—will emigrate freely. The Santals of Midnapur and of the Santal Pergannas have great faith in the *hákim*. But in Midnapur every one from the chowkidar to the magistrate interferes and tries to prevent the coolie going; and every one below the magistrate has to be fed. Ten years ago I used to get 60 or 70 coolies a month in Midnapur, mostly Midnapur people.

The real obstruction to emigration is the prejudice against Assam which exists everywhere among those who do not know the place. I attribute the prejudice mainly to false stories spread by railway and police officials with a view to making money.

I work under Chapter III because some planters will only take registered coolies. I do not approve of absolutely uncontrolled recruiting, as things are at present, because the recruiter wants some protection ; at present every story against a recruiter is believed. Coolies who wished to return at the end of their contract at their own expense, should be allowed to do so. Emigrants from the Native States would gladly settle down on Government land in Assam, but whatever is done, recruiting will always be expensive so long as there is so much opposition as there is now.

I do not think that I could get more coolies by working under Section 92 for some time to come, because the people here are thoroughly imbued with the idea that if they are not taken before a magistrate they are being sent to some terrible place.

No. 117.—Mr. P. Veriah Naidu, *Retired Assistant Surgeon, Cuttack.*

I am about to take up an appointment as medical officer to the Keonjhar State. I have been in charge of Mr. Driver's free sardari depot at Cuttack for 1½ years. During the last year I have despatched about 200 coolies recruited through 46 sardars. Almost all the emigrants come from Native States. About 300 emigrants were despatched from the arkati depot belonging to Mr. Driver. Assam itself is not unpopular, but people are reluctant to go there on account of the low wages offered, as they can earn the same pay here. I would raise the pay in Assam to R6, R7 and R8 for men, and to R5, R6 and R7 for women. If that were done, I think that plenty of emigrants would be obtained both from the district proper and from Native States, but especially from the latter. If this increase were given, I estimate that I would get from 500 to 1,000 coolies a year. Labourers would prefer a contract for three years to the present four years' contract, as they would like to return to their homes after the expiry of three years. They would appreciate the offer of repatriation at the expiry of the contract. I have ascertained that those who go with their wives and families wish to settle in Assam for good, and would prefer to take up land there to being repatriated.

Emigrants do not object to registration if carried out by the magistrate at the depot, but they are afraid and ashamed to go to the cutchery where there are crowds of amlahs and peons, etc. Bengal new Rule 224 has not interfered with our recruiting.

No. 118.—Babu Janaki Nath Bose, *Government Pleader, Cuttack.*

I have lived in Cuttack since 1885. Emigration to Assam is unpopular in this district. This is due to the long journey, to ignorance of the conditions of the climate and of labour there, and to the fact that people do not like being tied down by a contract. I have not heard of any extensive abuses in this district in connection with recruitment for Assam.

The people of the district are generally poor, but they are content with little and prefer to remain at home to emigrating. In the villages people can live on R2 or R3 a month. An unskilled labourer can earn 2½ annas a day in the town, and at the rate of about R4 a month in the villages, working for a full month without holidays. I consider that the statutory minimum wage in Assam is too low to attract labourers there and to enable it to compete with Calcutta.

To popularize emigration to Assam I would recommend, firstly, that the wage should be not less than R7 a month ; secondly, the abolition of the contract, or if that is not possible the reduction of its term, and thirdly, the withdrawal of the right of private arrest conferred on employers, which people do not like. I certainly think that the offer of land to emigrants would be an inducement to people to go to Assam. The repatriation of labourers on the expiry of their agreements would also be popular.

30th March 1906.

No. 119.—Munshi Asad Hussain, *Sub-Agent, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Cuttack.*

I have been working here for the past three years. Most of the sardars sent down to this district recruit in the Gurjat Native States. The number of persons recruited in the past three years has been as follows :—

Year.	No. of Sardars employed.	No. of persons recruited.	
		Labourers.	Dependants.
1903—1904	315	548	268
1904—1905	367	971	489
1905—1906 (up to date) . .	289	487	382

Cuttack. Last year out of some 350 sardars 50 absconded. I took proceedings under Section 198 of Act VI against 14 sardars belonging to the British district, and obtained convictions in 6 cases. I can do nothing when the sardar runs away into the Native States. The sardars who recruit in the Native States are not interfered with by the higher authorities of the States, but the villagers and the police are against them. The contractors in Cuttack also have men on the bank of the Mahanadi, which separates the Native States from British Territory, to take coolies from my sardars when they bring them into Cuttack. I have had to station a man on the principal ghat to look after the sardars and their coolies, and prevent their being interfered with.

In the present season a sardarni, Musammat Sachori, who had last year taken up 40 coolies, came down from the Towkok garden of the Assam Company on 28th October and went into the Dhenkanal State to recruit. She has not yet returned. On the 28th March, 3 sardars from the Gatoonga Tea Estate of the Moabund Company came down to recruit. They stated to me that they had been sent up three months ago by Sachori and her husband, who is also one of our sardars, through Mr. Macmillan's depot, and had now been sent back to get more coolies. It appears that Sachori is selling her coolies to the contractors. In February another similar instance occurred, where a whole family of 6 coolies, who had been recruited by one of my garden sardars, were found being registered before the magistrate by Mr. Macmillan. I wired to the local agent, Mr. Casey, at Berhampore. He sent Mr. Bradish up here, as the coolies were going to one of his gardens. Mr. Bradish went on to Calcutta, where the coolies had meantime been sent, and got them out of Mr. Mackertich's depot. There have been other similar instances of interference with sardari coolies by the contractors' men.

The Committee examined the three coolies mentioned by the witness—Dulabh, Arjun and Bairagi. Two belong to Dhenkanal and one to Angul. They state they were taken by Bijuri, the husband of Sachori, to Mr. Macmillan's depot. Bijuri and Sachori both disappeared and left them there, and the depot peons would not let them get out of the depot. They were sent to Balukmara garden (the same as Gatoonga), and they have now been sent down as sardars to recruit. They only arrived at Cuttack from the garden the day before yesterday. They say they have been put on contract in the garden, but against their will. The garden Babu forced them to sign the agreements. They do not like the garden and would like to get away from it. Their families are up there; they had taken their wives and children up with them. The garden manager has promised them a present if they bring coolies, but has said nothing as to the amount. When Sachori asked them to go to Assam, she said her children were all up on the garden and were quite happy, and they left with her willingly to go to the same garden. They did not know anybody on the garden they went to, but 28 people went up in the batch, all of them recruited by Sachori. They want to be sent to Towkok or any other garden, but they do not want to stay on their present one, as they are put to much trouble.

NOTE.—The Committee found that two of these men had passed through Mr. Macmillan's depot. The name of the third could not be traced in the register.

7TH APRIL 1906.

(MESSRS. BOMPAS AND MILNE *present.*)

No. 120.—MR. W. H. P. DRIVER, *Superintendent, Assam Labour Association, Cuttack.*

I was a tea planter from 1873-1877, and since then have been engaged in recruiting. When I was first connected with tea, we got coolies from depots in Calcutta; the bulk of these were worthless people, picked up from all over Hindustan. We found among them some good men from Chota Nagpur, so I was sent down to Chota Nagpur to recruit more. I started work at Ranchi. In my first year, 1877-78, with 24 sardars, I got nearly 1,000 people. One sardar brought in over 100 from Sirguja. I forwarded these coolies to be put on contract at Dhubri, but the agent at Dhubri under some misunderstanding took no contract, and they arrived on the garden free; they all stayed three years. These men all marched to Raniganj, railed to Rajmahal, and thence walked to Dhubri, and right up to North Lakhimpur. Government stopped this, and made us send them by steamer, by making regulations for the road journey which involved heavy expense.

As first I worked with sardars, but as I extended the work and recruited for more gardens, I took coolies from arkatis also. In the eighties, I was getting recruits from Bilaspur, Sambalpur and Ganjam, taking all the coolies through Ranchi; such coolies were not, however, numerous. In the famine of 1888, I went down to Ganjam and got about 600 coolies; the magistrate would not let me export them from Gopalpur, so I brought them to Puri and took them from there; this was a famine year. I used to send about 1,000 to 2,000 coolies a year from Ranchi. When the Bengal-Nagpur Railway opened, I started agents all down the line as far as Jubbulpore; after a year or two there was a scarcity, and the supply of coolies from the Central Provinces went up. After the famine of 1888, Central Provinces coolies left in train loads for two or three years. Whenever we get a connection in a new place, we get lots of coolies for a year or two, and then they become very hard to get.

After starting in Ganjam, we went into the Agency Tracts and got excellent coolies—Khonds and Savaras; afterwards the Agency Tracts were closed by Government. In Vizagapatam I started about six years ago, and am getting a fair supply of coolies from

Parvatipur. In Godavari I started work last year, and took out licenses under Act V of 1866. Government afterwards cancelled the licenses, as Act V did not apply, and I was discouraged from working free. I was getting Pariahs and a few *junglis*—Kois and Khonda Doras—before I stopped work. There is a considerable supply of labour available there in the jungle tracts. **Cuttack.**

British territory is now about played out for *jungli* coolies; there is plenty of labour available for Cachar. If the Native States were opened, there would still be a large supply of labour suitable for Assam.

I ascribe the shortness of the labour supply to—

(*a*) Zemindars, who do not want to lose ryots;

(*b*) Missionaries, who do not want to lose converts;

(*c*) Police, who want to squeeze money;

(*d*) Magistrates, who look on recruiters as criminals;

(*e*) And then, the penal contract. If a man goes up under contract, he does not mind whether he signs for one year or for twenty; but if you once start free emigration, no one will take agreements. At present no one believes in free emigration, because the coolie is put on contract directly he reaches the garden. If there were no contract at all, the supply of labour would undoubtedly increase, but free labour would not suit gardens which are for any reason unpopular. I would propose to divide the recruiting districts into two portions, and make both Cachar and Assam recruit only contract labour in Chota Nagpur, the Santal Pergannas, Bankura, Burdwan and Birbhum, and let them both recruit only free labour elsewhere.

If Cachar is free and Assam is under the Act, Assam need not suffer, so long as Cachar recruits only among the castes which cannot stand the Assam climate; but if Cachar recruits the *jungli*, it would have a distinct advantage over Assam. An Assam sardar now has no chance against a Duars sardar in the same village.

Nothing is known in the recruiting districts about the right of private arrest.

If the Act is abolished, there will be a recrudescence of abuses; I would have all coolies inspected, as at present, under Bengal Rule 224, even under a free system. This should be done in the district of recruitment, and there should be a further verification at Goalundo; this would insure that Rule 224 was not being evaded in the recruiting districts. I would have all coolies pass through Goalundo or Dhubri, as otherwise no control is possible.

I should like to see the registration of Native State recruits in the Native States, and I believe that if Government said that it would like it, the Rajas would agree. The Rajas should say whether they would allow contracts or not. We would be willing to pay a big capitation fee, and I believe the Rajas would accept such a fee.

The planter would pay much less for a free coolie than for a contract coolie; the price would not drop much at once, as the planter would hope that the coolie would not understand that he was free. An Act XIII contract would give the coolie a price. But if the coolie were really free, a time would come when the planter could not afford to pay.

I would suggest a law forbidding any garden from employing a coolie whom it had not imported, unless he could produce a *hathchitta* showing that he had been 12 months in the country. Then the coolie who wanted to leave a garden soon after arrival could go into the basti, but he could not move on to another garden.

Under my scheme of dividing the recruiting districts there would be no local contracts allowed in Cachar or Assam, so that the labourer who went up free would remain free.

Barring these rules, I would have no regulation of free recruiting in the way of feeding, clothing, etc., at all. In fact, I should like to have the Act repealed, and a new simple Act introduced without constant changes of rules. The present rules are interpreted differently by different magistrates.

Instead of allowing private arrest, I would appoint certain leading planters honorary magistrates, with power to issue warrants against absconding contract coolies.

I would not repatriate coolies, but I would have a provident fund for the first two years, towards which a rupee a month should be paid. The coolie would get R24 at the end of two years, which would enable him to go home if he wished. This would be in addition to the wages, and would apply to free coolies. This would benefit the planter, as it would keep the coolie on the garden. The non-return of emigrants to their country is undoubtedly a great obstacle to recruiting: it would be a very good thing for them to return home at intervals. Six months' privilege leave after three years' work might be granted to contract coolies, the planter paying for a return ticket.

I do not think that the grant of land, even rent-free in perpetuity, would attract people to Assam. I calculate that it will require a capital of R100 for a man to go to Assam and set up as a cultivator. I do not think that the offer of land at the expiry of the contract would be attractive; the offer would seem too far away and indefinite. But I would be willing to work a colonization scheme for Government, under which Government would import the labourer and give him land, while the planter would provide him with work until he was able to support

Cuttack.

himself by cultivation; the planter could supply houses, tools and clothing and good wages. The garden could afford to pay R7-8 a month, or 4 annas a day, as it would be saved the cost of importation.

If we imported free labour at a cost of R24 or R25 a head, we could afford to give R5, R6 and R7, and R7-8 for the first four years, respectively. The present initial cost of the coolie above R25 is due to the contract and legal restrictions. An offer of increased wages and free labour would undoubtedly in a year or two attract more labour. But freedom of labour is the essential. I would advise the Assam planter in his own interest to move steadily in the direction of free labour.

I should like to see a sympathetic Government official with Assam experience, to be designated Promoter of Emigration, appointed, whose chief business it would be to see that Assam got its requirements. I would also have notices issued to all police officers, chowkidars and village headmen that sardars were under Government protection, and were not to be interfered with; at present sardars are opposed at every turn.

Section 90 is at present a fraud, as the free coolie is put on contract directly he gets to Assam; these men often go up with the idea that they are going to be free labourers and consider themselves defrauded. I should like to see all local contracts abolished at once; it would be for the good of the planters, whatever they might think. Section 90 sardars have an advantage over Chapter IV sardars, because every formality in the Act costs money. I am not prepared to say whether registration in itself frightens coolies or gives them confidence, as I have not asked them.

The sudden withdrawal of contractors' recruiting would be the ruin of some gardens in Assam. Some gardens cannot get sardari labour. The sardars could certainly not get hold of all the coolies that the professional recruiter now obtains. I would, however, suggest that all contractors be private servants of one garden or association. I would not approve of licensing only one contractor for one area, as some employers would not be able to get labour from him. A good deal might be done to render the work of licensed contractors more easy; for instance, it is absurd that a contractor should have to maintain a depôt and a place of accommodation in the same place. I do not see that there would be any advantage in notifying Orissa under Section 3. There is nothing to prevent a contractor with an established connection getting a local agent's license, bringing down a dozen sardars and working his old business, calling the coolies brought in by his arkatis sardari coolies, and avoiding all restrictions. I believe that this has actually been done. If an arkati brings me unsuitable coolies whom I reject, the arkati naturally does not lose the coolie; he takes him to a garden sardar and sells him. If an arkati could not get a license, so as to be able to work for a contractor, he would supply coolies to sardars. If you stop agreements in Assam, the free contractor dies.

The future supply of labour for Assam must come from the Native States, whether they are open or not, and from Agency Tracts in Madras if they are open; and these I would prefer to open to free labour. Chota Nagpur is pretty well played out as a recruiting ground. I believe that my scheme of reserving a considerable area for free labour would tend to increase the total supply of labour.

Ganjam.

BERHAMPORE, 31ST MARCH 1906.

No. 121.—M. R. Ry. A. KAMESWARARAO NAIDU GARU, *Tahsildar of Berhampore Taluq, Ganjam.*

I have been here for eleven years, and have been Registering Officer during the last four or five years. There are three contractors working here, Messrs. Ross, Cook and P. S. V. Naidu. There is one local agent, Mr. Casey. The chief emigrants from this district are the Bavaris, who are agricultural labourers, and are very poorly off. They go in thousands to Rangoon from Gopalpur, and earn from R9 to R15 a month in Burma. The fare to Rangoon used to be R14, but owing to a steamer rate-war it has lately gone as low as R1-8 or so, and emigration to Burma has in consequence been especially brisk this year. The Steamer Companies have agents to collect passengers. The coolies return in 6 or 9 months and generally bring back 2 or 3 tolahs of gold worth about R70. The coolie borrows about R15 at starting; this he repays by money order in the first two months, and then saves. The women do not go. Some 5,000 people a month are now going. They leave in December after cutting the crops, and emigration is brisk up till June. People prefer to go to Rangoon rather than to Assam, as there is no agreement, and they get better pay. They get paid monthly in Rangoon. Wages in Burma have fallen of late, owing to the increased supply of Indian labour.

Recruiters and sardars hold out false inducement to people to go to Assam, and the latter do not really know what they are going for. Of those who go, very few return, and the belief is that they either die of fever or are kept in debt, so that they are unable to return on the expiry of their contract. The Bavaris are very lazy; they will grow only one crop; if it is good, they sit in idleness for the rest of the year: if it is bad, they go away to Rangoon. The Rangoon merchant does not exact a full task, and so encourages idleness. So far as I understand, in Assam there is a monthly wage of R5 to R6. Garden sardars give a good account of the

country, but returned contractors' coolies say that it is unhealthy, and that coolies cannot get away. There have not been many complaints about abuses connected with recruiting, but a good many women are enticed away from their husbands and relatives. I would recommend that every one who recruits a female coolie should bring a note from the village officer, certifying that there is no objection to her emigrating. At present I make no enquiry of the village officer, as this would take two or four months; I make enquiries of witnesses produced by the contractor. I make the same enquiry about single women brought by garden sardars, unless I see that they are of bad character. **Ganjam.**

Section 90 is not in force in this district. A daily labourer in the villages earns 2½ to 3 annas; before the railway came, the rate was 2 annas.

No. 122.—Mr. T. H. Casey, *Superintendent, East Coast Recruiting Districts, Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, Berhampore.*

I have the districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Ganjam and Vizagapatam under me. In the Ganjam district there are seven registration centres for registration of emigrants recruited under Chapter III, and three centres for emigrants recruited under Chapter IV. Section 90 is not in force in the district. The Agency Tracts which comprise the hilly portion of the district in the north and west, and extend to about half the area of the district, are absolutely closed to recruiting since 1901. In the open parts of the district the classes which are chiefly got for Assam are Bavaris, Panos, Dandasis, Kapsavaras and Telugus. These are all landless labourers; the first three form the great majority of the labouring classes in the north of the district, the Kapsavaras and Telugus are found in the south. I cannot say to what extent there is surplus labour available in the district, but there must be a large amount, as emigration to Burma is so very heavy. In 1904 it was reported that 80,000 persons went to Burma in the three months of October, November and December from the North Madras coast. The emigration goes on for about eight or nine months in the year. I do not know what wages these people get in Burma. Returned coolies tell me that they earn R14 or R15 a month.

The extent of emigration under Chapter IV can be seen from the following figures :—

Year.	Sardars received.	Act coolies despatched.		Free coolies despatched.		Total.
		Labourers.	Dependants.	Labourers.	Dependants.	
1901-02 .	187	409	373	...	...	782
1902-03 .	282	494	484	296	241	1,515
1903-04 .	591	391	245	161	105	902
1904-05 .	444	223	149	181	82	635
1905-06 to date	455	425	380	242	194	1,241

The free emigrants are people got from the Orissa Native States, who are not registered here.

Recruitment for Assam started, I believe, about 1893-94. The Railway was not opened until 1901. The emigrants used to be sent by Gopalpur to Calcutta by steamer. I believe the opening of the Railway has had no effect on emigration. It has made the passage more easy, but it has not increased the numbers.

People are not ready to go to Assam, unless they are really badly off. They have very little idea of what the place is like. They hear a great deal in the district about Assam being very unhealthy, and about the life on the gardens being a hard one. These reports are disseminated by the better classes to keep the people from moving from the district. The lower classes are so ignorant that they would believe anything they are told by their betters. I have never heard such rumours spread regarding emigration to Burma. I think people would go as willingly to Assam as they do to Burma, if Assam offered equally good prospects. I do not think there would be any objection to going up to Assam for four years. Very few people come back from Burma before four years, but they then came back with a fair amount of money, which does not, however, last long, as they have to pay up the debts their families have run up during their absence, and the loans they have had to take to enable them to cross to Burma. A gang of men borrow money on joint security at heavy interest before they start.

I think that especially at registering stations in the interior of the district the registration of emigrants tends to make people afraid of Assam. I could not say from my books how many people have become unwilling because of the registration formalities. Registration properly conducted by a sympathetic officer would not deter emigrants. I generally have

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my coolies registered at head-quarters, as I can myself be present and see that everything goes right. I think registration is left too much to subordinate magistrates, who have the same idea that most people here have, *viz.*, that Assam is an undesirable place, and that it is to the coolie's advantage to dissuade him from going there. I think that if Section 90 were introduced and registration dispensed with, I could get five times the number of emigrants I now do, even in spite of the counter-attraction of Burma and the bad name that Assam has got.

The enquiries made about single women are very stringent. In some cases the magistrate sends a notice to the village from which a single woman is said to have come. This brings in claimants, not for the woman, but for compensation from me in order to allow the woman to go. Any system of letting the village officer certify that a woman is regularly recruited would only mean that money would have to be paid. I would not be in favour of such a system. The sardar is always fair game for the village officers, as well as for police and railway subordinates.

I consider that Government officers when registering emigrants should clearly explain that, besides the statutory wage, the coolie gets free housing and medical attendance, that overtime money can be earned, and that women and children can all make money. If this were thoroughly understood, I do not think that the competition of Burma would count for so much. In the first place, the Burma emigrant has borrowed money for his journey, and has to pay his own way, and living in Burma is very much more expensive than in Assam, so that the actual prospects of the coolie are not so much better. The local wages are 2½ to 3 annas per day for a man and 6 pice for a woman. Assam's offer of R5 is not more than a man can earn here, but there is this difference that Assam gives work all the year round, while here employment is not continuous. Whether the planter can increase the wage or not I cannot say. If he can, it would make a difference in recruiting.

I would also favour repatriation of the coolie at the close of his term of contract, if he wished to get back to his country. It is important that he should be allowed to return, and there should be nothing to keep him in Assam. The classes who would go to Assam are landless, but I am sure they would like to get land if they possibly could.

Nothing is known down here about the right of private arrest on the gardens.

If Act VI were abolished, there would be the old abuses, unless recruitment were confined to sardars consigned to responsible people in the recruiting districts. When the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, I do not think it will affect Assam. When a coolie goes from here, the Surma Valley or Upper Assam is all the same to him. I would, however, confine Surma Valley recruiting to sardars only, otherwise there will be abuses.

I think that it should be possible for Assam to get all its labour through sardars. I would be inclined to do away with the contractor system altogether. In sardari recruiting a great deal depends on the garden; if a sardar comes down from a garden which he likes, he will do well. Another sardar from a neighbouring garden will do nothing, I suppose because he is not keen on his garden. The difference is frequently remarkable.

In this district one of the licensed contractors recruits ostensibly in the Native States through garden sardars.

There is much trouble in the district over countersignature of garden sardars' certificates. The magistrate has local enquiry made about the sardar's residence and relatives, and tests the accuracy of his statement in this respect, before he countersigns the certificate. I have had to return numbers of sardars because of countersignature being refused for what I considered trivial reasons. Any sardar who lives near the scheduled districts is at once refused countersignature.

I also wish to have only one centre for registration in this district. The present system of having to work at three different places is very inconvenient and expensive. There is also delay in registering emigrants, which adds greatly to the expense. At Berhampore I can very rarely get my coolies registered oftener than once a week. At the out-stations coolies have often to wait for 15 days.

I should like to see the Agency Tracts opened to recruiting. There are large numbers of people from there up in Assam. But they cannot come down and take away their own relations.

Cachar and Sylhet coolies are not put on contract down here; those for the Assam Valley are.

No. 123.—Mr. P. S. Venkateswarlu Naidu, *Licensed Contractor, Berhampore.*

I have been working as a contractor at Berhampore for the last three years, and for two years previously I worked as a licensed contractor in Bengal, with my main depot at Raniganj.

Last year I despatched 78 labourers to Assam, and the year before 110. One reason for the poor recruiting results is that the Agency Tracts are closed to recruiting, as well as the Orissa Native States adjacent to Ganjam. People from the Agency Tracts do not go to Burma or the Colonies, but they would be willing to to Assam, as many of their rela-

tives are already there, and they know about the place. Coolies from the plains portions of this district are not suitable for the Assam Valley, but are taken by Cachar and Sylhet. Registration also gives rise to difficulties here. There are four registering centres for contractors' coolies in this district, and we have to maintain places of accommodation at each of them. There is also often great delay in registration owing to the absence of registering officers on tour. There is often a further delay in putting the labourers under contract at Berhampore as the magistrate, who is Superintendent of Emigration, may also be away. If the term of the contract were reduced to three years, people would go more freely to Assam, while if it were reduced still further, or the contract abolished altogether, still more would go. If the rate of wages offered by the Colonies, *viz.*, 12 annas a day, were paid in Assam, there would be no need for contractors, as labourers would go there of their own accord. Great numbers go to Burma every year. They start in October or November, and return after six or eight months. Many earn ₹1 a day there in the docks and rice mills. To induce people to go to Assam we tell them that they get a free house and free medical attendance, and that they can earn 6 or 7 annas a day overtime, and will be paid extra for Sunday work. A certain number of people go when they are told this, and they do so willingly hoping to benefit themselves. I estimate that about 15,000 people go every year from the Ganjam district alone to Burma.

I would recommend the reduction of the term of contract in Assam, and the payment of wages at the rates in force in Burma or the Colonies. To raise the wage by 8 annas or a rupee would do no good, but two rupees extra might be an inducement. The repatriation of labourers on the expiry of their contracts would have a very good effect. With the exception of four batches of coolies, whom I once met at Khurda Road, I have never seen a returned emigrant, other than a garden sardar, in Ganjam, and villagers often ask me whether any people ever return from Assam to their homes. I tell them that I shall send them up and they can return as sardars. If there is repatriation after four years on the garden, it will give people here much confidence, and many will go to Assam; but repatriation alone will not enable Assam to compete with Burma, unless the wage is raised at the same time.

Copy of letter dated Berhampore, 2nd April 1906, received from witness.

With reference to the evidence given by me on the 31st ultimo at Berhampore, I beg to submit that it is not my intention that the deception of coolies referred to therein does not apply for Ganjam, but to Raniganj, since I am a native of this place, and had my recruitment at Raniganj, keeping foreign district people as my agents and staff to conduct the business there, which resulted in a very unfavourable term.

No. 124.—Mr. P. Jagga Rao, *Police Inspector, F. Berhampore Division, Ganjam.*

I served in the Gumsur Division, which is adjacent to the Agency Tracts, from 1898 to 1902. There was then considerable emigration of Khonds, Panos, etc., from the Agency Tracts. Owing to frequent complaints of wrongful confinement, false promises and other malpractices by contractors and their recruiters, recruitment for Assam in the Ganjam Agency Tracts was prohibited by Government. There is no recruiting for the Colonies in the Agency Tracts. At present recruitment for Assam is confined to the plains portions of the district. Malpractices still abound. People are enticed away from their villages to Berhampore on false pretences, and kept in private houses till they express themselves willing to go to Assam, when they are taken to the regular depots. Their names, castes and places of residence are changed; and if they are not willing, they are represented before the magistrate by proxy. I can quote specific instances of this, if required. These abuses are more frequent in the case of persons recruited by contractors than in the case of sardari emigrants. I have had complaints of sardars enticing away single women. I am of opinion that registration should still be continued, even in the case of sardari emigrants, and should be made more strict, an identifying witness, such as the village officer, being required in every case. I should like to see the contractors' system abolished altogether.

I have never had any complaints regarding emigration to Burma, as the people go and return when they please. The agents who sell the steamer tickets get a commission of 8 annas per head from the coolies, and the steamer fare is at present ₹4.

During my experience of seven years in this district I have seen very few emigrants returned from Assam, even including sardars. People do not like to go there, as they are ignorant of what they can earn and of the conditions of labour on the gardens. The wages in Assam are also low, and emigrants have to stay there for four years instead of being able to return when they like as is the case in Burma.

No. 125.—Mr. P. R. Cooke, *Licensed Contractor, Berhampore.*

I have been in the recruiting business for the past ten years in the Central Provinces, Bengal and Madras. I was two years at Berhampore before, and have now been here for the past 15 months. I am getting very little labour here now; this is due to the restrictions of the Act; a few respectable men are allowed licenses, but the men who do the real work get no licenses. The closing of the Agency Tracts has also stopped our work. I have only got two

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licensed recruiters in Berhampore. I had applied for more licenses, but they were refused. The men who actually go into the villages and do the work are not considered respectable enough to get licenses. The greater part of my work now is in the Native States of Orissa. If a man comes to me from the prohibited tract and asks to go to Assam, I am not allowed to recruit him, and registration is refused. In 15 months, before Act VI was passed, I sent up 1,500 coolies, but in the last 15 months, under the Act, I have only sent up 26 labourers mainly recruited in the Native States. There is suitable labour in some parts of the plains portions of the district, men worth R80 to R95 a head at Goalundo. There are Bavaris, Dandasis, Khonds, Keots, Chasas, who are suitable for Upper Assam. I could get people in the plains if I had more recruiters. People go to Assam in spite of the competition of Burma, because of what the recruiter makes them understand. I believe Mr. Taylor, when District Magistrate, got the Agency Tracts closed, because he thought that there were too many people leaving the tracts. If the Agency Tracts were opened, I could send up 50 or 60 coolies a month.

I should like to see the Act abolished, and free recruiting allowed again. Malpractices were not common on this side, and I believe that they could easily be kept in check. If the Act is withdrawn from Cachar, it will make no difference; the people will still believe that it is in force there, and will not understand that there is free labour there. I am now sending most of my coolies to Sylhet. I had a contractor's license at Purulia in September 1904, but another contractor, who was working free at Midnapur, interfered with me; he wanted to send Midnapur coolies to Purulia and to have Purulia coolies sent to Midnapur. The object was that coolies who would not be willing at Midnapur should be sent to Purulia to be made willing, and that coolies who could not be registered at Purulia should be sent to Midnapur. I did not agree to this, and gave up my license, as Purulia is far away from Berhampore. If the Act were withdrawn, Assam would get a full supply of willing labour. The people are frightened of going before an official—I mean the recruiter is frightened; he thinks that he may get into trouble if the coolie changes his mind. People are quite willing to go to Assam, and do not object to the four years' contract.

No. 126.—Mr. A. P. Patro, B.A., B.L., *Pleader and Chairman of the Municipality, Berhampore.*

I am a native of this district. In 1901 I came here from Madras, and have lived at Berhampore since then. I have prepared a note on the subject of emigration to Assam which I wish to place before the Committee.

I have for the last three years taken an interest in the subject in connection with a movement for the improvement of the condition of the Uriyas. I should like to see the poorer classes among the Uriyas taken up to Assam and settled there. In the Gumsur and Surada tracts of this district there are great numbers of people living from hand to mouth, and I would give my support to any project which would promote their welfare. But as conditions are in Assam at present, there is no encouragement whatever for people to go there in my opinion. The form I should like the movement to take would be to have a colonization scheme supported by Government; this would lead people to go and settle in Assam. And eventually they would be available for labour on the tea gardens.

Note recorded by witness.

Having been requested by the Collector of Ganjam to appear before the Committee and to give such information as I can to represent the interests of the people, I beg to submit the following memorandum.

One of the chief causes I can discover on enquiry, which has rendered it difficult to secure a supply of labour for Assam from this district, is that there is no adequate inducement for the labourer to leave his native place to go to Assam. People in this district, as a rule, are reluctant to emigrate to other parts of the country, they prefer to starve with their families in their native village with the scanty supply of food and other necessaries there available for them. There is work for them in this district. If there be famine or scarcity here, it is more a famine of food, and not of capital or labour. The ordinary daily labourer in ordinary seasons earns as much as 2½ annas or 3 annas a day, that is, R4-11 or R3-12 per month. There is no great difficulty for people finding labour in the district, as the introduction of the Railway has opened fresh fields of employment in all directions. The prospect of great irrigation works projected and the Atagada mines when worked will afford much scope for labour. Therefore labourers require sufficient inducement to go to Assam. While, on the one hand, people are willing and ready to go to work in Burma, Natal and Fiji, still they are reluctant to go to Assam. It is not merely the distance, but the nature of the engagement that stands against them. A labourer goes to Burma and works in any district, either in the railway works, mills or gardens, and returns after a year or two with the savings of his labour, liquidates his old liabilities, buys a pair of bullocks, and a cart for his family, or helps them to lease a piece of land for cultivation; and thus the villagers and the neighbouring people find an example in him. There is no obligation or binding contract for a certain number of years, or that he should be confined to work under a particular master for the whole period of his stay in that province. If the present system of emigration to Assam is to be improved at all, it must be by affording facilities in increasing wages and in making it obligatory on the part of the estate to send back the labourer to his country after the period of contract is over.

There is a strong belief among the labouring classes that any one who goes to Assam never returns. This impression is not altogether wrong. My information is that not many labourers, not even 5 per cent. on the average, including garden sardars, have returned to this district during the last five years. There are many difficulties in carrying out this principle. I do not vouchsafe for the correctness of my information, as I depend upon hearsay for the allegations. A coolie costs nearly R80 to the estate, the salary he receives varies from R5 to R6 a month, the charges of his *khoraki*, clothing, etc., have to be deducted, there is therefore very little margin for savings and a labourer must inevitably remain on the garden till he has worked out his liabilities, which are very heavy. It is said that the labourer is given almost double the usual quantity of labour to make up the

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expenses incurred on his importation. The labourer who is completely under the power of the *maistrie*, or the servant of the employer, must obey implicitly for fear of coercion. The monthly salary he can earn is inadequate for his maintenance and much less so to lay by for his future help. The charges of travelling from the estate to Goalundo and thence to Ganjam are estimated to be about R14; the labourer has no means of meeting this, and he is again bound down to servitude on the estate.

The system of recruiting labour for Assam, I mean the ways and means adopted by the recruiters, is very much open to criticism and censure, be it the contractors' or the sardari system. A garden sardar comes down from Assam, receives some advance from the local agent and goes out to see his relations and friends to induce them to go with him; he spends the money he received and again applies for funds which are supplied to him promptly. He is not generally believed by the people, he is considered to be a traitor, and a bait laid out by the employer. So it might happen that he is unsuccessful in taking anyone with him, and when he goes back to the garden with the increased liability against him, he is bound to serve the estate for the rest of his life. Even if he is able to take one or two coolies, it is after several mis-representations that he would be able to secure them, and very often few of his relations go with him, the victims generally being enticed from the prohibited parts of the district. The sardar is really no improvement over the contractor, for the means adopted by him are the same as those of the contractor.

The other chief impediment is the complete ignorance on the part of labourers here of the state of matters on the gardens, and the absence of any information regarding the condition of people who have already gone there. Coupled with this, the labourer has no example before him of any person having returned to his native place. Certainty of return to his native place must be clearly assured to him, nay proved to him; he imagines that to go to Assam is transportation to a penal settlement. The period of four years is very long for a labourer to be away from his native place. The period may be reduced to one or two years, or no stipulation may be made for a fixed period, and facilities must be afforded for his easy return to his native place. There is great room to suppose that the employer will be interested to secure the labourer after the contract term, as it would be very cheap to retain him. It is enough if the labourer is paid a few rupees more as an inducement to renew his contract for a further period, and he would slavishly submit to this, but a free coolie will not do so. On the other hand, if wages be raised and facilities provided for safe return, and the period of service made optional, labourers will freely seek service in Assam, and the middlemen and their commission agents will become superfluous. What is lost in increased wages is gained by the savings of commission to middlemen between labourer and employer.

I have no information on the practical operation of the right of private arrest, but on principle I must protest against it. It is unsafe to vest such power in the employer. There is no such provision in Madras Act V of 1866, and unless a sufficiently strong case is made out, it should not find place in the Act.

I think that, if the Act were withdrawn from the whole Province, there would be danger of recrudescence of the abuses which existed under Act I of 1882. Even under the present system there are occasionally such serious abuses that it is unjust to allow the recruiters to have a free hand in the matter. According to the present system labourers are required to be registered in the respective taluqs, whence they are recruited. The recruiters take only such of the coolies as have already submitted to them, the others are marched down to Berhampore or any other centre, where they are kept under all sorts of influences, and sometimes the unaccepted coolies are marched direct to the estate as though they were recruited from the Tributary Mahals, Nayagarh and other places outside the district. The names will be changed and residence will be falsely entered, and the wretched coolies are persuaded and more often terrorised to admit the same in terms of the tuition. The contractors and local agents may not be aware of the malpractices of their agents, but the fact remains that the recruiters or sardars draw men out to Assam on all sorts of stories, temptations and pretences. There was an instance where two family women were seduced on false pretences; the relations of the women came and took them away from the depot. The other day it was reported that the wife of a *samathanam pzik* was seduced on misrepresentation, and the matter is said to be pending before the Collector. Instances could be multiplied, and the injustice will be great if the precautions required for recruiting labourers are removed. There must be therefore some protection against the malpractices of the recruiters. In this connection I would suggest that the Registering Officer should require of the recruiter or garden sardar to produce a certificate of identity from the village officer of the place whence the coolie is recruited, and should examine the officer in person if he thinks it necessary. This would act as a check against some of the malpractices of recruiters and garden sardars.

There is also a convenient abuse in vogue, that of recruiting labourers from the Tributary Mahals, such as Nayagarh, etc., where the recruiter is free from the limitations of the Act. Under the cover of that license the sardar or the recruiter may repeat the abuses of old. Even in the case of free emigration, registration must be effected at least in one centre, for instance, all the coolies that go to Assam from several parts must be reported at Berhampore before they are allowed to go out of the district; if that be so, the great restrictions now existing, namely, the obligation to register labourers of the respective centres before the magistrate of the taluq, will be minimised, and labour may with greater ease be drawn to Assam.

The time has not come for the repeal of the Act. When the labourers see the advantages of their voluntarily going to Assam for work, there would be no need for the same.

I strongly advocate that the facts regarding the wages and condition of labourers in the tea gardens should be laid before the public in the recruiting districts. As I said before, if my information is correct, the treatment of labourers on the tea gardens is very miserable, and the Committee should make careful and independent enquiries into it. It is said that all the charges incurred for the importation of a labourer are realized from the work of the labourer. The Act lays down that, unless the labourer is able to turn out a certain portion of the work, he will not earn his wages according to the schedule rates. The work that is allotted to the labourer is more than he can do within the time, he is unable to earn the maximum wages, to pay off the charges which the employer wants to realize, and he cannot meet the charges of his *khorak*, clothing, etc., thereby he is always in a state of indebtedness. At the end of the contract period there are perhaps heavy liabilities against him. He has no means to pay for his passage back to the district, therefore a small offer of extra cash tempts him to remain and renew his contract. He is more and more involved in liabilities, and is never able to get out, nor can he go out of the garden. The case of a garden sardar is an exception; he is specially bolstered up for the purpose, he is paid a commission for his nefarious work of catching labourers and exhibiting himself to be in a prosperous condition, but even this is only very transitory; when the man resides here for a few weeks, the truth comes out, and people know that he is only a bait, and never care to notice his overtures to them. If this is the real state of affairs, I suggest that the matter must be seriously enquired into, and the results made widely known in the recruiting districts. As I said, this is only hearsay and rumour, but there cannot be this belief, unless there is some ground for it.

The promotion of colonization is very desirable, both from the point of view of labourer and employer. But the practical effect of it must be closely watched—settlement of the kind must be free and voluntary. The idea will not be popular, unless the labourer has really seen the advantage of settling down. My information is that labourers go to Assam in the belief that they will get better living and wages, and there are prospects of earning some money and coming back to their native place in a prosperous condition. If a labourer and his family worked for a year or two in the country, after which he is free, he may be encouraged to settle down; it is very desirable that facilities should be afforded to him for such settlement. But what I would

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prefer to see would be direct colonization from this country to Assam, without the coolie going first to the garden. This would eventually help to give a regular supply of labour for the tea industry.

The suggestions I would make therefore are—

1. The penal contract should be cancelled. The period of service may be fixed for one year, at the end of which a bonus may be given to the labourer to meet the charges of travelling back to his district; for some time this must be made obligatory.

2. The wages should be increased to R10 a month. The wages in Burma at present vary from R9 to R20 per month.

3. An officer who has had some experience in the district, or any other competent person, should be deputed to the gardens to report on the condition of life among the labourers, and the circumstances actually existing on the gardens. Free labour should not be encouraged. Registration should be made compulsory. Instances have occurred under the present state of registration where, under false pretences the sardars enticed coolies away, and the relations of the alleged labourers came up the next day and took back the alleged labourers.

4. The Act should not be repealed.

5. Sections 195 and 196 must be withdrawn.

6. Renewal of the contract must be made purely optional.

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No. 127.—*Written statement put in by* MR. A. M. ROSS, *Licensed Contractor, Ganjam.*

I have been requested by the District Magistrate of Ganjam to attend your meeting; as I am unable to be present in person, I beg to tender you these my views on the subject of emigration to Assam (generally) gained from experience in this business from the year 1882.

The questions on which you are especially desirous of obtaining information are the following, to which I reply serially in the form of question and answers :—

The causes which have rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour for Assam.

The use of Section 3, Act VI of 1901, by Local Governments, which empowers them not only to close areas to recruiting, but further empowers them to extend only portions of this Act to fresh recruiting areas. In this connection I have never been able to understand why the Madras Government have so persistently kept their Agency Tracts closed to recruiting, considering that recruiting had gone on in these areas for years previously. If, in so doing, they are actuated by political motives, such as the fear of risings among the aboriginals, this is a presumption not warranted by facts. There may have been a few cases of abuse in the Agency just the same as there have been out of it, but these cases could always have been satisfactorily dealt with either under Act VI of 1901 or the Indian Penal Code.

Whether the existence of the Penal contract for four years and the right of private arrest conceded to employers have contributed thereto.

Emigrants, as a rule, are indifferent as to the period of contract (four years); they would as soon go for five years as for four. No coolie emigrating to Assam is aware of the existence of Sections 195 and 196, Act VI, and as a matter of fact, if his agreement for four years is signed by him in good faith, it is, and should be, a matter of indifference to him as to who arrests him when he decides to abscond, be it his employer or the police. I should imagine he would prefer being arrested by his employer.

Whether if the Act were withdrawn from the whole Province and a system of free labour were established in Assam, there would be danger of recrudescence of the abuses in the recruiting districts which existed under Act I of 1882.

This greatly depends on the nature of some special legislation which is absolutely necessary in the recruiting districts to govern and control this emigration business into Assam, including Cachar and Sylhet. There were very few cases of abuse perpetrated by licensed contractors and local agents working under Chapters III and IV of Act I of 1882. All the cases of abuse that did occur were committed by so-called "free labour contractors" (most of whom were unreliable uninfluential individuals of no standing in public or, for that matter, private life) working under the free sections of this Act, until the appointment of Superintendents of Emigration in 1894 or 1895. Subordinate police (constables and others) were mainly responsible for aiding and abetting any cases of abuse that did occur. I have often been a silent and helpless spectator of these cases on the railway platforms at Raniganj and Purulia, where I have seen husbands separated from their wives and children from their parents through the forcible mediation of police constables and other police subordinates. If all restrictions were removed in the recruiting districts and a system of "free labour" were established with regard to emigration into Assam, independent of all Government control, there would most certainly be a recrudescence of the abuses that formerly did exist in the recruiting districts, though the numbers of emigrants (of sorts) into Assam would undoubtedly increase.

What measures should be adopted in order to render service in the districts of the Upper Assam Valley popular? In this connection the following may be suggested :—

1. Repeal of the Act.

What is meant here by popular? As a matter of fact, service in any shape or form, whether in the Upper or any other Valley in Assam, would be distasteful to the majority of emigrants, who, even in their own homes, would, if they could conveniently manage it, live without working.

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2. Withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196.
3. Repatriation of labourers on the expiry of their contracts.
4. The promotion of colonization by the grant of land with a revenue-free term.
5. Increase of the pay of labourers.
6. The placing of facts regarding the wages and onditions of labourers in the tea gardens before fficers and others interested in the recruiting istrict s.

1. This would make no difference to the emigrant: he would just as soon sign a contract under an Act as not, because, under any circumstances, he is aware that he is not being taken at another person's expense to Assam on a pleasure excursion.

2. Quite unnecessary from the emigrant's point of view.

3. Though this would be some inducement to the emigrant, it would fall heavy on the planter. On the face of the questions, how could the planter guarantee this?

4. Yes; this would be an inducement, but only after the emigrant got on to the field of his labours.

5. On the last occasion, when wages were increased eight annas a month, this was done in the face of strenuous opposition raised by the whole of the tea industry. I hold, from personal experience gained, not only while engaged in this business, but as an indigo planter and zemindari manager, that according to the present rate of wages, with a guarantee of rice at R3 per maund (together with other advantages thrown in), the coolie in Assam is at present better paid than others of his class in the Presidencies of Bengal, Madras and the United Provinces. Local enquiries, if made in these Presidencies, will prove the truth of my statement. Government officials in sparsely populated areas will say that they pay 3 and as far as 4 annas a day for coolie labour; this is true. But do they guarantee regular work at these wages? Further, do they find work for the wives and children of these coolies, the same as is done on a tea estate? Last, but by no means least, do they pay these wages to the coolies themselves; or is the cash paid through their subordinates?

6. Yes; by all means. The prevailing idea amongst the majority of officials in both the superior and subordinate services in the recruiting districts is that this is, as it were, a legalised slave trade, and in consequence they look on it with disfavour.

Competition between Calcutta agents, their selecting agents and employers on the one hand, and coolie contractors on the other. In this connection it should be noted that high prices rule only in accord with the demand.

The reasons for the present high cost of the recruitment of labour, in this connection, should le considered—
1. The extension of Section 90 of the Act.
2. The grant of further facilities to recruitment by garden sardars.
3. The withdrawal of recruitment by contractors or, if contractors be retained, the placing of all contractors in parts where Section 92 of the Act is in force under Chapter III of the Act.

1. Yes: this would help. Under any conditions it would help still further, if the same facilities were granted to contractors working under an Act.

2. & 3. These two questions may well be answered together as they are analogous. When Government inserted the word "sardar" into Act I of 1882, they meant this term to refer to a "garden coolie" returned to his native home wholly and solely for the purpose of recruiting his relations. When it comes to his recruiting strangers, this term of "sardar" becomes a misnomer; he, for all purposes, and especially from the Government point of view, becomes a recruiter (as this term is understood by Emigration Acts) pure and simple. I make a statement here which will, I am certain, stand the light of enquiry. Fifty per cent. of the emigrants recruited by garden sardars are no relations of theirs, but are recruited in the same way as they would be by contractors' recruiters. What are the further facilities required by sardars? Surely it cannot be immunity from punishment under the Indian Penal Code for abduction, etc. A sardar, when he commits himself, is shuffled off to his garden by some unscrupulous agent, whereas the unfortunate recruiter has to face the consequences of his misdoings in the recruiting district, where he is usually well known. If you call for statistics, you will find that, since the introduction of Act VI, sardars are answerable for most of the prosecutions and convictions under this Act.

I have worked as a contractor in the Madras Presidency since 1895, outside of Acts, as also under various Acts. I have devoted both time and money to my business. I hardly think Government would be justified, in merely with the stroke of a pen, terminating my business and depriving me of a livelihood, a business that they themselves have up to the present time both countenanced and legalised.

Interested associations and individuals, who may at present form the majority, seeking monopoly of a lucrative business, will contend that the contractor, as understood by law, is not a necessity. My contention is, that if he were not a necessity, how comes he to be in existence. At the present moment, notwithstanding the existence of contractors, the tea industry is suffering from an admitted scarcity of labour. The object of Government, as also of your Committee, is to procure an adequate supply, though as cheaply as possible. If contractors, who at present supply 33 to 50 per cent. of emigrants into Assam, are prohibited by law from carrying on their business, by whom, and how, is this 33 to 50 per cent. of labour to be supplied? The idea promulgated and advanced by those interested is that

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contractors' recruiters compete with sardars in the recruiting districts, and interfere with their work, thus causing the output of sardari recruits to diminish. This is a fallacious argument, as the veriest novice in any branch of this business will admit. It is not possible for a recruiter to remove a sardar's relations when he is in the field, but when it comes to removing strangers, the question simply devolves itself into a fair and square competition between recruiters, this from the Government point of view. Might I ask these associations and individuals if there is no competition amongst sardars themselves? A local agent has a number of sardars from different gardens, for the same recruiting locality or area, committed to his care. They arrive together and are all advanced money together. Presumably, the local agent will wish those interested to understand that there is no competition among these people. This is absurd. Any contractor will state, and it can be proved from Government records, that as soon as the sardari recruiting season (say, from October to May) begins, his recruiting operations fall off. Does this point to the fact that recruiters hinder sardari work? I should imagine this fact points all the other way.

Under the Act sardars always have the advantage of accompanying their recruits (who are at the time ignorant of their future life in Assam) to Assam. This is an admitted great advantage, which is denied recruiters. An intending emigrant will far sooner leave his home with a sardar, who truly or falsely promises to accompany him, show him the road, and ingratiate him into his duties, than with a recruiter who parts from him the moment he leaves the recruiting district.

If contractors are done away with, their work must be done by others, no matter under what appellation they are styled by law or otherwise. At present the only people capable of doing their work are local agents, as understood by Act VI. What is to prevent these local agents from entering into private contracts with firms or gardens to supply them with labour, outside that recruited by their sardars, at contract rates? Then, from the Government point of the view, would these local agents not be considered contractors, as understood by the Act at present?

Briefly I beg to suggest that, if contractors be found necessary, and they be allowed to exist, no legal obstacles, such as at present exist, be placed in their way. I quite agree with the suggestion that no contractors be allowed the privileges conferred by Section 92 of the Act, provided, of course, that Section 90 be expunged along with Section 92.

For the smooth working of this business in the Madras Presidency, I beg to here briefly give an outline of an Act, which should satisfy both Government and all others concerned.

1. That the whole of each district be opened out separately to recruiting. Each district to have its Superintendent of Emigration, Registering and Medical officers at some centre, convenient to all interested in the business.

2. That even if it be decided to do away with all Acts in Assam, registration and medical examination in each recruiting district be made compulsory. This to apply to emigrants from Native States also, passing through a district *en route* to Assam, because once a coolie from a Native State enters British Territory, he makes himself amenable to British law.

3. That all engaged in this business be licensed and styled contractors and recruiters and local agents and sardars.

4. That some fees be paid for license, registration, medical examination, etc.

5. That some restriction be placed on the grant of licenses. The indiscriminate grant of these so far has been the cause of a lot of trouble. According to Act VI, if my clerk rakes together a little capital and applies for a contractor's license, at present in the ordinary course of official business and events, he will be granted one which will practically place him on the same footing as his late master and enable him to successfully work in opposition to him.

6. That Local Governments be empowered to frame rules to meet the requirements of the Act.

Whether the withdrawal of Act VI from the Surma Valley Districts and the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara will prejudicially affect recruitment for the Upper Assam Valley.

It will not, if all recruiting in the recruiting districts is governed by an Act based on some broad lines as suggested by me above. Otherwise the Upper Assam Valley planters will experience difficulty in procuring an adequate labour supply, and, under the conditions suggested by the question under answer, they will most certainly have to pay very heavily for their labour.

Whether the existence of free emigration to the former districts, side by side with recruiting under the Act for the Upper Assam Valley, will lead to difficulty in the recruiting districts, and whether abuses are likely to arise in consequence.

It will be impossible for Government to in any way control emigration under these conditions. No contractor in his sane senses will take out licenses for supplying labour to the Upper Assam Valley and thereby place himself under restrictions, while a horde of unlicensed and unscrupulous individuals are carrying on their business without licenses and outside of all restrictions and impediments.

The above are my abbreviated views on this most intricate question of emigration to Assam as called forth by the questions you have asked. Were it possible for all interested in the tea industry to amalgamate, this at present most intricate problem would, with the aid of Government legislation (which would under these conditions without doubt be granted), be easy

of solution. From my personal experience of the business and the many schemes for amalgamation that have hitherto met with failure, I conclude that Government cannot by legislation compel this amalgamation, so much desired by those seeking monopolies in this business in the recruiting districts.

CHATRAPUR, 6TH APRIL 1906.

(MESSRS. BOMPAS AND MILNE *present.*)

No. 128.—MR. J. G. D. PARTRIDGE, I.C.S., *Collector, Ganjam.*

I have been Collector of Ganjam since the middle of 1901. 1897 was a year of famine, and we had large relief works, and there was a good deal of emigration to Assam. In this district we find the Telugu along the coast from Berhampore southwards. The Telugu started emigrating to Burma, and the Uriya is now following him. The population of the Agency Tracts is over 300,000. In the largest Division there are about 40,000 Savaras, 140,000 Khonds and 25,000 Panos. The Panos are thieves and fairly prosperous, making a living out of the Khonds. The hill people here do not migrate or come down into the plains to cut the crops, etc.

Figures of recruiting for the last three years are :—

Year.	Labourers.		Dependants.		Garden Sardars.
	Sardari.	Contractors	Sardari.	Contractors.	
1902-03 (July to June)	494	218	484	113	215
1903-04	380	204	232	31	355
1904-05	218	145	150	17	111

There are now three registering centres—Parlakimedi, Berhampore and Russelkonda. I am not in favour of having only one registering centre. I refuse to countersign the license of a Khond, Savara or Pano sardar if he lives within 7 or 8 miles of the Agency Tracts, because I assume that he will probably recruit in those tracts. The necessary enquiry takes three weeks or a month.

I should not object to sardari recruiting in Udayagiri, near Gumsur, and in Parlakimedi, at the northern and southern extremities of the Agency Tracts. The jungle has nearly gone in these parts, and in times of scarcity it would be a good thing to have an outlet for the Khonds; and if the system worked well, the area opened might be gradually extended. I would have the emigrants registered in the hills before the Agency Officers. The offer of land might be attractive to the hill people, and repatriation would certainly tend to promote a flow of emigrants if those who went to the tea gardens were contented with their lot. I do not think a four-year contract is too long. I should be strongly opposed to the extension of Section 90 to this district.

I should like to have some control over free emigrants nominally recruited in the Native States because it is perfectly possible that these emigrants are really recruited in the Agency Tracts.

No. 129.—*Note submitted by* MR. J. S. HEANEY, I.C.S., *Assistant Collector, Ganjam.*

I was Sub-divisional Officer, Berhampore, for about two years in 1898 to 1900, and have just been Sub-divisional Officer for five months in the Agency Sub-division of the Ganjam District.

The great feature of the labour conditions in the taluqs along the coast is the annual exodus to Rangoon. The local crops are cut in December, and immediately this is done, a migration takes place, not only of the agricultural labourers, but of the small *pattadars*, whose holdings are not sufficient for the maintenance of themselves and their families. In years when crops are bad the emigration extends to larger landholders. Only males emigrate, and the return takes place from the end of April till June, when field operations engage the people till the following December. In Ganjam agricultural labour is largely paid for in kind.

There is not the slightest difficulty about an able-bodied labourer obtaining the passage money. Sowcars willingly advance money on promissory notes, taking the precaution to secure themselves from all possible loss on account of deaths of individuals by advancing to gangs of about twenty who hold themselves jointly and severally liable. The rate of interest is 4 annas per rupee for money to be repaid in less than six months. As a rule, it is repaid by money order in one or two months. The cost of a passage to Rangoon is now very low.

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The emigrants at once start remitting money by money order to their relations. The amount so remitted is very large, but the Postal officials are unwilling to give me information on the subject, but I learn that it can easily be obtained from the Deputy Comptroller of Postal Accounts, Bengal Audit Office, Calcutta. The principal places to which money is remitted are Berhampore, Ichhapur, Puroshottapur and Somaeta. When the emigrants finally return, they almost invariably bring back a portion of their money invested in gold in the shape of gold leaf, which is easily worked up by the local goldsmiths into the earrings worn by both the men and women.

Regular remittances to their wives and families are considered obligatory on the emigrants. The marriage customs are rather lax among the class of people that emigrate, and with the caste panchayats, and to a certain extent the criminal courts, the test of the validity of an emigrant's claim on his wife at home is whether he has remitted money to her regularly or not.

The greater part of the Rangoon emigrants are drawn from the coast taluqs, and are not of the class sought for Assam emigration. The Assam emigrant is looked for at the foot of the hills further inland, where malaria is prevalent, and the people therefore presumably capable of standing the Assam climate. Their geographical ideas are vague, and the ordinary term for to "emigrate" is to "go to Rangoon." I cannot say whether the recruiters for Assam deliberately utilize the prestige of the voluntary emigration of the coast taluqs to Rangoon, to secure their emigrants, but the confusion undoubtedly exists.

Recruitment of coolies for Assam is not permitted in the Agency, but I learn that from Udagiri Taluq of the Agency, which is more in contact with the plains than any other part, numbers of Khonds have been secured by recruiters even since recruitment has been prohibited. The numbers may not be considerable, but on enquiry one hears of the disappearance of people from most villages, and the Khonds assert that they have been taken to "Rangoon." The Khonds are habitual drunkards, and it is not very difficult to decoy them away by plenty to drink. The Khonds in Udagiri Taluq have lost a great deal of the most valuable land through their drunken habits and the cunning of the low countrymen with whom they come in contact. Their standard of living is extremely low, and the extent to which they depend on mangoes, mowra and roots from the jungles makes it very precarious. They are, however, attached to their own country, and their attitude towards unknown places is one of terror, so that, practically speaking, they can only be decoyed away by pandering to their vice of drunkenness. There is no doubt that their condition in Assam would be much better than in their own country, but the necessity for adopting underhand methods to induce them to start off, and the compulsion which follows on their speedy repentance when they get sober, has discredited recruiting with officials. Formerly, when recruiting went on from the Agency, numbers of Khonds made their escape and came on foot all the way back from Calcutta or further. Another objection to recruitment is the fact that the administration there is largely of a paternal character, and the presence of recruiters, with a standing and supported by interests which would render them independent of ready control by local officers, would be a menace to the peace of the country. The Khonds suffer from periodical fits of temper bordering on rebellion, during which they require very careful treatment. Emigration is not popular among them, and at such times any difficulty with recruiters might culminate in something approaching a rising. If recruiting were permitted, the local officers would have to put up with objectionable recruiters till some overt breach of rules could be established by evidence to justify their exclusion, whereas the needs of the administration would require action on less tangible grounds.

This objection may seem absurd, but it must be remembered that there is only one Sub-Divisional Officer to 3,000 square miles of Agency, the postal system and communications are backward, the Khonds are not petition writers, and the whole Agency might be in a flare while the Sub-Divisional Officer was practically powerless to interfere. The Assam interests, needless to say, would be opposed to interference with recruiters, and interference which might be considered necessary by the local officer would not commend itself to outsiders who could not appreciate the delicate position which he occupied. The administration depends on the prestige of the local officer, and the exercise of his discretion would be continually hampered by the facility with which any recruiter could, by addressing the Tea Association, secure the interference of the Government of India. The exercise of discretion is so much a matter of opinion that the local officer would speedily find that his interference must be restricted to cases where he can produce the evidence which will convince an independent authority.

If emigration of whole families could be arranged, I have little doubt of the benefit which it would be to the hill-men, but it would be very difficult to do so, and recruiters would infallibly take the easier method of decoying away individuals, and would at once rouse the resentment of the Khonds and the opposition of officers.

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WALTAIR, 3RD APRIL 1906.

No. 130.—MR. J. M. TURING, I.C.S., *Head Assistant Collector and Magistrate, Viziana-gram, Vizagapatam District.*

Recruitment for Assam commenced in the Vizagapatam district in 1901. It was then carried on under the provisions of Madras Act V of 1866. 449 persons were recruited in that

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year by three European contractors. In October 1901, Act VI of 1901 was applied to the Vizagapatam district. In April 1902 the Agency Tracts of the district were closed altogether to emigration by a notification under Section 3. Since then there has been a small extent of recruitment carried on; 27 persons were recruited in 1902, 9 in 1903, 74 in 1904 and 97 in 1905. There are at present two contractors working in the district, with depots at Parvatipur, but they are doing very little business.

One of the reasons for closing the Agency Tracts I understand to be that the country is nowhere overpopulated, and there is no surplus labour available, but the principal reason is to avoid disturbance among the aboriginal tribes. The more uncivilized of the tribes would resent their people being taken away to an unknown country, and there would always be a chance of the recruiters being cut up if the temper of the tribes was roused. There is hereditary enmity between the Khonds and Dombs, who are the petty money lenders of the hill tracts and are also a criminal caste. If recruitment were allowed in the closed area, the Dombs would certainly be made use of for recruitment, and this the Khonds would not stand. The reason why the Dombs would be used for recruiting is that they are the most intelligent of the inhabitants of the Agency Tracts.

There are certain portions of the Agency Tracts where you might safely recruit for Assam and also certain castes you might take out,— we should be pleased to see Assam take the Dombs in numbers for instance—but there is the practical difficulty of limiting recruitment to the particular areas or specified castes, and it has been considered safer to have the Agency Tracts closed to recruiting as a whole. I consider that the present arrangement should continue both on political grounds and also because the new Raipur-Vizianagram Railway will open out parts of the Agency, and it would be, in my opinion, a mistake to let the present somewhat scanty population be drawn upon in view of the future development of the Tracts.

There is next the question of drawing people for Assam from the open parts of the district. I notice that in an application recently made by Mr. Ross, a licensed contractor, to the Government of Madras, asking that the Agency Tracts should be opened to recruiting, he states that coast labour is not suitable for Assam. I presume he means labour from the plains portions of the coast districts. But apart from the question of the suitability of the labour, there is the further question of whether people from here are likely to go to Assam.

I give the following figures showing emigration to Burma from the two ports of Vizagapatam and Bimlipatam in the last three years :—

Year.	Sailed for Burma.	Returned from Burma.
1903	13,560	14,486
1904	20,937	12,938
1905	21,478	18,270

There is, as will be seen, constant going and coming between this district and Rangoon. The people go away on the average for eight months; most of them do not take their women with them. So far as I can gather, the coolie makes from ₹12 to ₹18 per month in Burma. He can come back when he pleases. The emigration to Burma is not controlled by Act V of 1866, as the people go spontaneously just as they do from district to district. Burma must always be a keen competitor with Assam.

There is further the annual migration to the Godavari district for transplanting and reaping the paddy crop, which draws a large number of people every year from this district.

I can conceive no reason why any one should go to Assam on the terms the tea-gardens offer, when by going to Burma ₹10 or ₹15 can be earned for a certainty. Burma has also the special charm for the Telugu coolie, that he need work for only 7 or 8 months in the year and idle all the rest.

There are further two very large projects about to be undertaken in this district, the Nagavalli Irrigation work and the Raipur-Vizianagram Railway. For the Irrigation project the Public Works Department have begun importing labour already, partly because the Telugu is such an unsatisfactory worker; he is so lazy. But such suitable labour as there is will be taken up to a very great extent by these projects.

No. 131.—Dewan Bahadur B. Narayanamurty Pankulu, *Retired Deputy Collector, Vizagapatam.*

I was a Deputy Collector and retired last year. I was in Ganjam for nine years up to 1901, and then served in Vizagapatam. When there was emigration to Assam from these two districts, it was not popular. The people did not know about the conditions in Assam. The wages were too low to attract them, and no one ever came back from Assam to tell them what it was really like. In 1896, owing to the famine, coolies went to Assam from the Ganjam Agency Tracts, but I learned from their relatives that they had not heard from the emigrants, nor received any money from them by money order. From the early nineties, the emigration of the Ganjam Uriyas to Burma began to largely increase, as they gained confidence in crossing the sea. In the famine of 1896, I found that large remittances were being made regularly from Burma to the families left behind. A lakh of rupees was being remitted monthly from Burma to the Gumsur Sub-Division alone during the famine. The profits of

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Burma emigration are enabling the landless labourers to buy up land. This makes Burma more popular than Assam.

The jungly tribes do not go to Burma; they are afraid of the sea. They never come down into the plains to work. In famine times, the Savaras and Khonds can support themselves for months on forest produce.

The Agency Tracts were closed to recruiting, because it was believed that the recruiters were only getting hold of people by false representations; and the country is also very thinly populated, and cannot spare the people. The men among the Savaras are very lazy, and I have not heard of their going to Assam. The Khonds are stronger and more industrious; some of them used to go to Assam.

People are even less likely to go to Assam from Rajamundry than from this district, because the Godavari Agency Tracts are peopled by Telugu-speaking people who will not leave their country, and the plains people go in great numbers to Burma. A good many people go to Natal from Vizagapatam.

4TH APRIL 1906.

(MESSRS. BOMPAS AND MILNE *present.*)

No. 132.—MR. M. KUPUSWAMY, *Sub-Magistrate, Parvatipur, Vizagapatam District.*

Registration of coolies at Parvatipur began in May 1904, and the following registrations have taken place:—

1904	14
1905	183
1906 to date	95

There are two contractors, and some garden sardars have been working for the last month. The latter appear to be under an agent stationed at Berhampore, and to be bringing coolies from the Central Provinces, Bastar and Kalahandi, they rest at Parvatipur and then go on to Berhampore. I have no evidence that they have been recruiting in this district. The coolies now being registered at Parvatipur are chiefly Paidis, Jatas and Malas. The Jatas are a hill tribe. These people are very poor and also lazy; I asked some of them why they would not stay and work on the Nagavalli anicut near their own homes, but they preferred to go to Assam. They probably thought from the recruiters' representations that they were going to have an easy time on a fixed monthly wage in Assam, with little work to do, and so preferred to go. I have not heard of these three castes going to Rangoon.

A casual labourer gets 2½ to 3 annas a day in my taluq. The man who is accustomed to doing earth-work finds work near home, and does not go to Assam; the coolies now going to Assam are those who are very poor and never do any regular work. There are many such in the taluq, perhaps half the population. I have refused registration in many cases, because I found that the coolie did not understand the terms of contract. Only four days ago, I asked a man whether he wished to leave his family and land for four years; he said, "No." He understood it was only for one year, and he was willing to go for one year; but directly the recruiter got hold of him again, he said he was willing for four years. In my opinion a one-year contract would be much more attractive than a four-year one. I think that any coolie who wishes should be repatriated at the end of his contract. A man goes to Assam on the strength of certain representations, if at the end of a year he finds that the place does not fulfil his expectations, it is only fair that he should be sent home.

The coolies now being registered are mostly family parties. I have refused registration of 13 or 14 persons in the last six months.

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MADRAS, 5TH APRIL 1906.

(MESSRS. ROBERTSON AND GORDON AND CAPTAIN KENNEDY *present.*)

The three members of the Committee present met the Hon'ble Mr. M. Hammick, C.I.E., Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, and discussed with him the question of emigration to Assam from the Madras Presidency.

Past orders of Government regarding emigration to Assam.

Hitherto emigration to Assam has been confined to the two districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam. In 1866, the Madras Government passed an Act (V of 1866) to regulate the manner of engaging and contracting with native inhabitants of the Presidency of Madras for labour to be performed in any part of India beyond the territorial limits of the Presidency. In 1867, consequent on reports received regarding the mortality on tea gardens in Sylhet, the Madras Government prohibited (G. O. No. 1285 Public, dated the 16th October 1867) the issue of licenses under Act V to contractors or recruiters who might desire to recruit labourers for the tea districts of Assam.

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In 1889 it was found that coolies were being taken out of Ganjam in considerable numbers, sent on to Calcutta and put under contract there. In order to control this traffic, the Government of Madras (G. O. No. 913 Public, dated the 13th November 1889) decided to allow recruitment for the tea districts under Act V of 1866 from the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam, the prohibitory orders of 1867 being cancelled, so far as these two districts were concerned.

In 1891, Act I of 1882 was extended to the district of Ganjam, but the recruitment of labour in Vizagapatam continued to be regulated under Act V of 1866. In consequence of abuses having arisen in connection with the recruitment of "free" labourers under Section 7 of Act I of 1882, the Madras Government, on the representation of the District Magistrate of Ganjam, considered it necessary to prohibit the recruitment of certain classes living in the Agency Tracts of Ganjam (Khonds, Sawaras and Panos). They further directed the District Magistrate to enforce the provisions of Act V of 1866 against all unlicensed recruiters.

On the passing of Act VI of 1901 the District Magistrate of Ganjam reported that "contractors generally seemed to evince a preference for working under Act V of 1866, "because they were thereby practically able to make their own terms as to contracts and thereby "defeat one of the objects of the new Act, and that it was undesirable that the two systems "should exist side by side." The District Magistrate of Vizagapatam at the same time wrote that experience in the year 1901 (the first year in which recruitment for Assam had taken place to any extent from Vizagapatam) had shown that Act V was too general and indefinite, and there had been considerable difficulty felt in working it. Under G. O. No. 1020 Public, dated the 8th October 1901, notifications were therefore issued extending the Assam Labour and Emigration Act (VI of 1901) to the district of Vizagapatam, prohibiting the recruitment of labour in the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam for the labour districts of Assam, except under the provisions of the Act, and prohibiting absolutely the recruitment of labourers in the Agency Tracts of Ganjam for the labour districts of Assam. A similar absolute prohibition against recruitment in the Agency tracts of Vizagapatam was issued with G. O. No. 302 Public, dated the 1st April 1902.

Results of recruitment during the last four years.

The number of emigrants (including dependants) recruited since 1901 has been as follows for the district of Ganjam:—

Year.	Under Chapter III.	Under Chapter IV.
1901	424	668
1st January 1902 to 30th June 1903	497	1,628
1st July 1903 to 30th June 1904	235	640
1st July 1904 to 30th June 1905	162	368

For Vizagapatam, the results have been practically *nil*, except in 1901, when 449 persons were recruited for Assam.

Mr. Hammick considers that the main reasons for emigration being so limited are—

(1) that Assam cannot compete with Burma with the good wages which the latter Province offers and the freedom which the emigrant to Burma enjoys;

(2) that, as far as is known, very few emigrants ever return from Assam;

(3) that enquiries have shown that probably no money is ever remitted to their homes by people who have gone to Assam; and

(4) that Assam has a bad reputation as regards climate.

Closing of the Agency Tracts.

The Agents have always reported unfavourably regarding emigration from the Agency Tracts to Assam. In 1900 Mr. Taylorfrom Ganjam reported a number of specific instances of fraudulent recruitment of persons of aboriginal descent. The Government of Madras have adopted the recommendations, which have been strongly pressed by the local officers, that the Tracts should be closed to recruitment for Assam for the following reasons:—

(1) The people are extremely backward and are easily misled by the false representations of recruiters.

(2) Owing to the unhealthy nature of the climate, the Government establishments in the Agency Tracts are inferior, and with the present establishments there would not be adequate control over recruitment.

(3) The distances between police stations and between magistrates' head-quarters in the Agency Tracts are very great, and communications bad. In order to obtain proper supervision, it would be necessary to increase the existing establishments and, even then, owing to the villages being scattered and the absence of roads, any really effective check over recruiting would be very difficult.

(4) There would be serious danger of unrest among the Khonds, if recruitment were allowed.

Madras.

The Government of Madras are opposed to opening the Agency Tracts to recruitment in any form and would not be prepared to allow garden sardars to work there even under the control of a responsible local agent. So necessary has it been found to guard these areas from interference that the Abkari and Forest Departments are only permitted to exercise a most limited jurisdiction within the tracts, and there is no possibility at present of any outside agency being allowed to carry on a business like recruiting among the tribes who inhabit these hills.

Extension of Section 90.

This matter has recently been under the consideration of Government who have decided that, in all cases, registration of emigrants in the district of recruitment is necessary and that the extension of Section 90 is inadvisable.

Extension of Act VI of 1901 to districts other than Ganjam and Vizagapatam.

The Madras Government are proposing to the Government of India that Act VI should be extended to the districts of Godavari, Kistna, Guntur and Nellore, subject to the proviso that recruitment be allowed only under Chapter IV of the Act, and that the Agency Tracts of the Godavari district be absolutely closed to recruitment for Assam.

Effect of repeal of Act VI of 1901 in the Surma Valley and the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup.

When Act VI is withdrawn from these districts, recruitment for them from Madras will be governed by Act V of 1866. The Government Order of 1867 prohibiting all recruitment for tea gardens in the Province of Assam is still in force in the districts of the Madras Presidency with the exception of Ganjam and Vizagapatam, but the Madras Government will be prepared to consider whether the order should be withdrawn in order to allow recruitment for the Surma Valley in accordance with the provisions of Act V of 1866.

Effect of Act V of 1866 in restricting emigration to Assam.

There has been practically no experience of the working of the Act. It was only used in the district of Ganjam to control unlicensed recruitment for Assam when Act I of 1882 was in force, and in the district of Vizagapatam in the year 1901 when 449 emigrants were recruited under its provisions. An application has recently been received from a Missionary Society in Nellore for permission to send people to the Assam tea gardens, but with this exception no instance has occurred in recent years of any proposal to conduct emigration under the Act. The prohibition of 1867 being still in force, the Act has never been used for recruitment for Assam. Nor has it ever been applied to emigration to any other place. The Act covers emigration only to parts of India outside the Presidency of Madras, and it does not therefore affect recruitment for the tea gardens in Ceylon, nor the assisted emigration to the Straits Settlements, which takes place from the coast districts, south of Madras. Emigration both to Ceylon and the Straits Settlements is free from all restrictions, and the emigration to Burma being purely spontaneous and unassisted is not affected by the Act. Even were the prohibition of 1867 as regards Assam not in force, Mr. Hammick considers that, under existing circumstances, there would practically be no emigration to Assam, unless under misrepresentations by recruiters, as the inducements which Assam offers to emigrants are insufficient. When the districts of Godavari, Kistna, Guntur and Nellore are brought under Act VI of 1901, it is highly improbable that emigration will take place from the first two of these districts, which comprise the rich deltas of the two rivers. The people are well off, and labour is abundant. From the hill portions of Guntur and Nellore, it may be perhaps possible to obtain some labourers for Assam, but this will remain to be seen.

Registering centres in Ganjam.

The Agent of the Tea Districts Labour Association at Berhampore referred in his evidence before the Committee to the inconvenience of having more than one registering centre in the district. The Government of Madras have on more than one occasion considered this matter, and have decided that it would not be sufficient to have only one registering centre for the Ganjam district at Berhampore. The district is a large one, and Government object to emigrants being brought long distances to Berhampore before being placed before the registering officer. Government are desirous that registration should be conducted as near as possible to the homes of the people, and before an officer who possesses local knowledge, and can properly consider any complaints that may be made by the emigrants.

No. 133.—Mr. C. V. Srinavasa Pillai, *Emigration Agent for the Ceylon Tea Gardens, Madras.*

The members of the Committee interviewed a Mr. C. V. Srinavasa Pillai, who stated that he had for the last two years been an Emigration Agent for the Ceylon Tea Gardens. He thought that labourers could be obtained for Assam from the Cuddapah, Nellore, and North Arcot districts, and from the districts south of Madras except Tinnevelly, if offered 8 to 10 annas per diem for a man and 6 to 7 annas for a woman, with free passage to Assam. Last

year he sent about 120 coolies to the Straits Settlements for the coffee gardens and rubber plantations there. They went as free labourers and men received 7 to 8 annas and women 5 to 6 annas per diem as pay. He was of opinion that people might go to Assam on these wages, but only after emigration to the province had been popularised; till then the higher rates previously mentioned must be paid. He considered that no one from Southern India would go to Assam for the wages at present offered there, as they can earn as much at home. **Madras.**

CHINGLEPUT, 7TH APRIL 1906.

No. 134.—Captain Kennedy interviewed MR. T. H. HILL, *Protector of Labour, Federated Malay States,* at Chingleput.

The following is a summary of the information kindly supplied by Mr. Hill.

I joined my present appointment in 1901, before which I was a large contractor and importer of labour in Ceylon and the Federated Malay States. I have owned and managed estates in Travancore, Ceylon and the Federated Malay States since 1869. Indian labour is imported into the Federated Malay States for public works of all kinds, railway construction, sugar, coffee and rubber plantations and other miscellaneous concerns. The labour is of three kinds :—

(1) Indentured.
(2) Imported free through kanganies.
(3) Non-engaged voluntary labouring immigrants.

(1) Indentured coolies are imported chiefly for work on sugar plantations, only 500 having been imported in 1904 by the Public Works Department, as the free ticket system is being gradually evolved. Indentured labourers execute contracts to work for 600 days. The contracts are explained to the emigrants in the first place at the depot at Negapatam, and are again explained to them at Penang where they are required to sign the indentures. Failure to do so renders a labourer liable to imprisonment, but any immigrant is free to leave the depot at Negapatam up to the last moment. The lowest rate of pay for indentured men is 7 annas a day and for women 5 annas, as stated in the Ordinance. The cost of passage (R11-8) is not deducted from the pay of indentured coolies.

(2) Kangany labour is recruited by persons sent from the estate to India, nominally to bring their relatives. As a matter of fact, however, kanganies bring also many of their friends and fellow-villagers. The kanganies receive advances from the Madura Company or Messrs. Binny & Co. The advances are as a rule limited to from R3 to R5 per recruit, which goes to the coolie. They bring in their recruits to Negapatam, where they are provided with tickets. Kangany coolies are under no contract; there is only a verbal agreement that a month's notice should be given on either side. All advances made at the time of recruitment and passage money are treated as a recoverable advance against the kangany coolie, and are admitted by him before his employer on his arrival on the estate, and are deducted from his pay by instalments regulated generally according to the option of the coolie. Labourers as a rule are anxious to discharge their debts as soon as possible. The rate of pay of kangany coolies varies according to the locality where they are employed. It is sometimes higher and sometimes lower than that prescribed for indentured labour. In remote localities a higher wage has to be paid and *vice versâ*. For instance at rail head on construction work a coolie gets as much as 14 annas a day. An estate with a popular manager and an established labour connection with India pays lower wages than a garden with an unpopular manager and without such a connection. Kanganies hold licenses issued by their employers and signed by the Resident of the State in which they are employed. They receive a commission of generally 2 or 3 cents. per coolie introduced by them for each day on which the coolie works. This is a very satisfactory system, as it gives the introducer of the labourer a financial interest in the welfare of his protégés. The kangany also receives his wages for the work he supervises or performs. He can earn as much as 25 dollars a month if capable of supervising from 50 to 70 labourers. If a kangany coolie leaves after due notice with a debt against him, the remedy against him is only a civil suit. I consider this to be hard on the employer and importer. As a matter of fact very few coolies have left in the past with outstandings against them.

(3) The non-engaged voluntary immigrant is a man who pays his own passage, seeks for work with contractors where high rates are prevailing, or with Government (Public Works, Municipal or Railway Departments), wherever he finds work agreeable to him. He is under no contract of any kind, and he can earn anything from 6 annas to 14 annas a day. People come from as far as Ludhiana and Rajputana as voluntary emigrants to one Government employer who is popular with them, but the bulk of labourers of this class come from

Madras.

Southern India. The most numerous of all classes of immigrants are those who come spontaneously. Free emigrants of this kind may stop for any length of time, provided they like the work and their employer. They may return in a few months or they may stay for years.

My appointment was due to the abnormal death-rates on railway and road construction works in Government Departments, and the general scarcity of labour. At that time Government had newly imported labour on its own account, and used as well to attract time-expired labourers by paying higher rates. The high death-rates I attribute to the fact that the proper way of treating Indian labour was not understood, and that the coolie was not in touch with his real employer. He received his wages through subordinates instead of from the district executive officers as at present. There was never any deficiency in the immigration of kangany labour, but the drainage from the estates on to Government works was severely felt and caused a shortage of labour on estates. The food supply in India had been normal for several years, and the inducements then offered, owing to the fall in the rupee value of the dollar, were not sufficient to attract labour. The prices of indentured labour also were forced up to the benefit of the recruiter but not of the coolie. As much as R56 per coolie was paid to the recruiter, absolutely without benefit to the emigrant. This was due to competition among employers. Free emigration also was not so considerable as it is now. The unsatisfactory death-rates among indentured emigrants deterred people from emigrating. I was told this by the people themselves. I do not think that malpractices on the part of recruiters had much to do with the unpopularity of emigration, as the coolie who survived used to do well.

The steps taken to improve matters were the introduction of closer relations between the Government district officers and the labourers employed by them, and the encouragement of kangany recruited emigration. It is part of my duty to tour in the Federated Malay States and to visit all estates and works where Indian labour is employed, and to look after the welfare of the immigrants. Owing to careful attention the death-rate of indentured coolies in the Federated Malay States felt from 87·60 in 1902 to 40·66 per *mille* in 1904. In order to attract labour we raised the wages of indentured coolies from about 5 annas to 7 annas a day for adult males. I am deputed yearly during the cold season to travel through the recruiting districts. I tour about from village to village, talk to the people, and show them pictures of the Federated Malay States. I generally seek for a returned emigrant and ask him to tell the people his experiences, which I discuss and confirm. This leads to emigration of the most satisfactory kind, *viz.*, spontaneous emigration, and aids the kanganies who may be seeking for labour. There used to be complaints of obstruction on the part of the police and railway officials, and at first I had to enquire into cases of this kind and to report offenders to their superiors. Now, however, such interference, as far as I know, has entirely ceased. This is largely due to the sympathetic and helpful attitude adopted by the Madras Government. I have placards posted up at railway stations and post offices stating terms, etc., with colcured pictures of scenes in the Federated Malay States. I have nothing to do with the actual recruiting; it is my business only to make known to the Indian labourer the advantages offered by the Federated Malay States. The system of advertising the advantages of the country is having good effect in increasing emigration, as recent figures show.

At present indentured labour is recruited for Government entirely through our Government agent at Negapatam, the Madura Company managing the financing of the business. The actual recruiter is licensed either by me or by the Superintendent at Negapatam. The recruiter makes about R10 per coolie shipped. We pay R38 per coolie and this includes passage money, clothes, cooking vessels, feeding in depot, etc. The Madura Company receive a commission on all disbursements. A coolie is landed for R38 *plus* the commission to the Madura Company. I refer to Government immigration. The planters work through their private agents in exactly the same way. They have, however, practically given the monopoly to one man. I am told that their indentured labour costs them the same as it does us. Surplus labour imported by Government and not required by Government Departments is distributed among planters.

There can be no doubt that coolies go more readily free than under an indenture. It is only influence or necessity or the profit to a third party which leads to a man emigrating to us under indenture. I have never heard of a man voluntarily re-emigrating under the indenture system, but there are thousands every year, both under the kangany and free systems, who re-emigrate. I am entirely in favour of kangany and spontaneous emigration. On a reference to my reports it will be observed that the death-rate among kangany recruited and spontaneous immigrants is normal, while that among indentured labour is abnormal. I attribute the higher death-rate among indentured coolies to the fact that they feel that they are not free. My experience is that free coolies do not desert to such an extent as indentured coolies.

The free ticket system is described in paragraph 7 of my report for the year 1904 (appended). It is in an experimental stage. I am of opinion that the free grant of tickets is more advantageous to the State than to the employer in any country which needs population. I compute that each imported coolie is worth R4 per annum to our Government. The result, however, of Government issuing only a limited number of free tickets will lead to complaints from those labourers who do not receive tickets, when the number is not equal to that of the free kangany emigrants. Our Government also offers 50 free tickets by each steamer to *bonâ fide* labourers who apply for them, or altogether 1,300 tickets per annum,

Madras.

The largest number of such tickets applied for as yet in one year has, however, only been 155, as people are suspicious of the system, and imagine there is some plot behind it.

All that I have stated has reference only to the Federated Malay States and not to the Straits Settlements. The bulk of the emigration is to the Federated Malay States.

The greater number of the indentured emigrants are paid by the task, but the free labourers on rubber and coffee plantations are paid a daily wage. Coolies on public works are paid either by task or a daily wage.

In my experience it takes at least two years before the employer begins to reap the fruit of additional attractions offered to emigrants. An increased supply of labour cannot be obtained immediately on offering better terms of employment; some time must elapse before the labourer in the recruiting district grasps the change.

In the Federated Malay States kangany coolies remain on the estate from 5 to 20 years or more. In an estate which I opened in 1880 many of the coolies imported to open out the estate are still working on it. Indentured labour was first permitted to the Federated Malay States in 1886. Some of the indentured labourers imported then on my estate still remain there as free labourers.

I do not think that the offer of a 4-anna wage would attract people to Assam from Southern India. I have found labourers in Southern India earning as much as 8 annas a day on digging ground nuts and 6 annas at harvest time. Coolies have told me that they emigrate to the Straits Settlements because they can work when they wish to do so all the year round. The great thing is to make the employment attractive. If this is done labourers will be obtained.

As will be observed from our annual reports considerable numbers of our labourers return to their homes every year, with savings. They also remit money home through the Post Office.

It is only in the case of indentured emigrants that the proportion of women is unduly low, kangany recruits and spontaneous emigrants have a fair proportion of women.

Extract paragraph 7 from the Report of the Protector of Labour on Indian Immigration and Emigration for the year 1904, Federated Malay States.

7. A system of free tickets from Madras or Negapatam to Penang or Port Swettenham was introduced by the Government from the 1st of July 1904. By this system the United Planters' Association and the Malay Peninsula Agricultural Association are to have from the Government 4,600 and 1,330 free tickets, respectively, per annum, for three years, the object in view being to help the planters and attract "free" labourers who would practically get a bonus of the passage money which is now included in advances which they repay their employers. Another object, and not the least important, is these free tickets would be a good advertisement of this country in India. The form of tickets was first approved by this department, and then they were printed and issued. These tickets are available only to *bonâ fide* labourers, and are exchanged on presentation by the British India Agents in Madras and Negapatam for free steamer tickets to Penang or Port Swettenham.

Number of immigrants to the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States, taken from the Straits Settlements Annual Reports on Indian Immigration.

	1901	1902	1903	1904
Statute immigrants	2,785	2,430	572	2,670
Free coolies (with aided passage tickets)	3,476	1,595	1,980	3,527
Other immigrants	21,998	16,217	19,478	24,504
TOTAL	28,259	20,242	22,030	30,701

NELLORE, 7TH APRIL 1906.

Nellore.

(MESSRS. ROBERTSON AND GORDON *present.*)

No. 135.—MR. MORRIS, I.C.S., *Collector, Nellore.*

I have been for 18 months Collector of Nellore. At present emigration to Assam from this district is prohibited by order of the Madras Government. I have had a letter from the Rev. G. H. Brock of the American Telugu Baptist Mission at Kanigiri, who had proposed sending up some of his Native Christians to Assam, regretting that he cannot meet the Committee at Nellore. He writes:—

"About all I have to say on the subject is that during May and June of last year I made a trip through Assam, and while there I was impressed with the possibilities of sending some of the Telugu people up there to work on the tea gardens. At Golaghat, Jorhat and Sibsagar we have mission stations of this mission, and if the Christians from the mission here were to go there, they could be looked after

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by the missionaries there. I was led to understand that the coolies are well cared for and so I have been anxious that some of the poor people here might go and better themselves there. I was informed that schools and teachers would be provided for the Christians if they went in sufficient numbers.

"During July and August last I had some hundreds of poor people on relief works, and when I told them of the work and the prospects in Assam, more than one hundred told me they would like to go. I could not say to what extent they would be willing to go now, but I think some would be glad to leave here as the times are very hard and will be more trying before June next.

"The Christians here are mostly from the Madiga class of non-caste people. I think there are none of them so far in Assam. They are most of them labourers for the Sudras so they would be used to farm work. The Christian community in the Kanigiri taluq is more than 8,000 and they are very, very poor after the hard times of the last two years. Many have left, going to Madras, Rangoon and to the Kolar Gold Fields, but I think Assam would be better than any of these places if the climate is suitable for them.

"It is my opinion that there are too many people in this taluq, and if it is decided that Assam is a suitable place for them I will gladly do all I can to induce the Christian people to go there."

The Madigas are low-caste leather workers. They are good labourers. They go regularly to the Kolar Gold Fields and to Rangoon.

Along the coast a man can earn about 4 annas a day and a woman 2½ annas. In the inland parts of the district wages would be less, from 2 to 3 annas for a man. An able-bodied man can always find work. There is large emigration to Burma and the Kolar Gold Fields, and in the north of the district people move into the Kistna delta annually to reap the paddy. They go to the delta about January and work till April. There is an important mica mining industry in this district, which employs over 10,000 persons. The labourers are paid by piece work, and earn from 4 to 8 annas according to the kind of work they perform. Men employed on drilling holes for blasting can earn the higher rate of wage. Women and children also work at the mines.

I should say that the statutory wage offered by Assam, even with overtime earnings, would not be an attraction to people of this district in an ordinary season, especially with the competition of Rangoon and Kolar. The Straits Settlements are trying to get people from here. They offer 7 annas a day for a man, but this does not seem to draw people. Natal secures a considerable number of emigrants from this district. I am told the attraction there is not so much the actual wages got, as the fact that in addition to this coolies can make side earnings. They keep poultry and sell the eggs and they also raise vegetables for sale.

The rainfall of this district varies from 30 inches in the interior of the district to 45 inches on the coast. At Kanigiri it would be about 30 inches.

The Members of the Committee met the Rev. Dr. Downie, the leading Missionary of the American Telugu Baptist Mission in Nellore, and spoke to him about the Rev. G. H. Brock's scheme. Dr. Downie had been 33 years in the Nellore district. He considered that the wages offered in Assam would possess no attraction for people in Nellore. They went in great numbers to Burma where they could get steady work on 8 annas a day, and could earn Rl a day in the docks; on the latter, however, steady daily employment might not be always had. Dr. Downie considered that Assam could never compete with Burma, especially as people could come and go as they pleased.

Calcutta.

CALCUTTA, 24TH MARCH 1906.

No. 136.—MR. R. P. GIBBES, *Government Emigrant Agent for Trinidad, Fiji, Jamaica and Mauritius, Calcutta.*

I have been in the Emigration Agency in Calcutta since 1900. Most of the labour for the Colonies comes from the United Provinces. In ordinary years the Colonies can get as much labour as they require. When there is a very good harvest, there is a shortage of emigrants. I personally visit the recruiting districts from time to time. I know that among the labouring classes there is a prejudice against emigration to Assam. The following I would give as an instance. In 1903 I visited the relief camps in the Raipur and Bilaspur districts of the Central Provinces and tried to enlist emigrants for the Colonies. I spent a fortnight among the labourers and personally explained the conditions fully to them, but I failed to obtain a single recruit. I had letters from the Deputy Commissioners to the officers in charge of the camps to render me every assistance, and I fully expected that I would meet with some success. The labourers refused, however, to believe that I was not recruiting for Assam, and said that if they were sent to Assam they would die there and never come back. It was quite useless trying to explain to them that I was a Colonial Government Agent; they absolutely refused to listen. I give the above as an instance, but I constantly hear the same story wherever I go. In the Central Provinces the existence of Assam recruitment has practically put a stop to recruitment for the Colonies, which cannot afford to pay the prices which Assam offers for its labour. No recruitment for the Colonies takes place in Chota Nagpur and in Lower Bengal. The best emigrants for the Colonies are got from Raipur and Bilaspur. Next to them the people from the United Provinces are preferred. The Punjabi is a very fine worker, but he is difficult to manage.

The recruiter for the Colonies when he has got a batch of coolies registered before the magistrate in the recruiting district, despatches them to Calcutta in charge of a person authorized by the magistrate. After the coolies are medically examined at the Calcutta

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depot and passed, the recruiter is paid two-thirds of the total commisson due. One-third is kept in hand and paid to the recruiter as soon as the coolies have actually embarked. No commission is paid for coolies who are rejected in Calcutta or who refuse to emigrate. Rejected coolies are returned to their homes at the recruiter's expense. Single women who refuse to emigrate are also sent home at the recruiter's expense. Single men and married couples refusing to embark are released at Calcutta. The registration in the district of recruitment forms the only contract with the emigrants.

Practically the same commission is paid for coolies wherever recruited. The amount actually paid to the recruiter varies with the railway charges. At present the rates for United Provinces labourers are R25 for a man and R35 for a woman, inclusive of all expenses prior to arrival in Calcutta. The commission varies according to the number of emigrants coming forward. For several years prior to 1902 the figures I have given were what had been ordinarily paid. Then came a series of two or three good harvests and the commission had to be raised, till early in 1905 the rates went up to R41 (man) and R56 (woman). In the latter half of last year the rates dropped again to their old level. In the present season, we have obtained plenty of labour, especially since December last.

Almost all the emigrants we get are people who have no means of subsistence. There are occasionally persons who go to the Colonies in order to earn the high wages offered, but this is not the rule. Emigrants are frequently detained in the depot for a month or six weeks until the ship's complement is ready. If a coolie turns unwilling in the Calcutta depot, he can be punished, but no steps are ever taken to prosecute a man who turns round. The threat of a prosecution is, however, used to prevent people from breaking their contracts. It would be a very bad advertisement for Colonial recruiting to turn a woman who has become unwilling at the depot out on the street, so she is sent back to her district, although she is really liable to be sent to prison. The ordinary coolie does not know the difference between one Colony and another. The recruiter only works for one Colony at a time, and the coolie goes to the Colony he is recruited for. At the end of the recruiting season for any particular Colony there are always a certain number of persons left in the depot, after the last ship to that Colony has gone. These are offered the option of a transfer to another Colony for which recruiting is going on, or repatriation with R4 compensation per head. The coolies usually accept transfer to a Colony where the terms offered are approximately the same, but it is very notable that hardly any person accepts a transfer to Mauritius where the rates of pay, etc., are much less attractive than elsewhere.

No. 137.—Dr. A. J. MacLaughlin, *Proprieter of Tea Estates, Cachar and Sylhet.*

I have large proprietary interests in tea gardens both in Sylhet and Cachar, and I inspect a considerable number of gardens in the Surma Valley on behalf of Boards of Directors in England.

United Provinces labour is very suitable for most Surma Valley gardens. In quite 50 per-cent. of the gardens in Cachar and Sylhet, United Provinces coolies thrive well. There are general complaints in Cachar and Sylhet of difficulties in bringing up emigrants, even after sardars have collected them, due to interference on the part of the police and railway officials and to the formalities that have to be gone through. Even sardars recruiting under Section 90 have experienced trouble, especially from the police. I feel that the promised abolition of the Act in Cachar and Sylhet will do much to set matters right, and the labourers will go up to those districts in the same way as they do at present to the railway. My object in desiring the abolition of the Act is that the interference of underlings may be done away with. I do not see why labourers who want to go to Cachar and Sylhet should not be permitted to do so, just as they go to the railway.

I am in favour of the abolition of contractors. I would have a law forbidding a contractor to work. I do not consider that contractors are necessary so far as the Surma Valley is concerned, even for opening out new estates.

I would be quite willing to allow coolies to return to their homes after serving a period on the garden, and even to pay their way down and also back again if there were a guarantee that they would return. We used to do this frequently formerly, but we are afraid to do so nowadays owing to the difficulties put in the way of the coolie's return by the present Act, to which I have already referred.

I think that some form of agreement is necessary, such as an Act XIII contract, preferably for one year for local labourers and two years for imported labourers.

I have no objection at all to offering emigrants 4 annas per diem, exclusive of overtime. What we want is coolies who will work and earn 8 annas a day. The objection to raising wages too much is that the labourers will do less work.

I have been in the Surma Valley for 30 years; the difficulty of obtaining labour has only become serious within the last three years.

I believe in giving labourers a plot of land. We always do so on our gardens. Provided we can get enough new labourers to take their place I should be pleased to see Government land colonised by time expired coolies; I would, however, object to it if new labourers are not

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forthcoming. I approve of the principle of offering intending emigrants a plot of garden land as an inducement to emigration.

I am not in favour of a Central Recruiting Agency. I prefer that each garden should recruit its own labour.

10TH APRIL 1906.

The Committee reached Calcutta on 10th April from Madras, having previously notified their visit to the Secretary of the Indian Tea Association.

No. 60, dated 24th March 1906.

From—The Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee,

To—The Secretary, Indian Tea Association, Calcutta.

I have the honour to inform you that the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee propose to return to Calcutta about the 10th or 12th April next, and to remain there for about a week, in order to consult the members of your Association who are interested in tea-gardens in Assam either as proprietors or agents. The Committee trust that a representative of each of the larger firms connected with the tea industry will appear before them and favour them with his firm's views as to the measures which should be adopted in order to secure an adequate supply of labour for the tea gardens in Assam and to reduce its cost. I, therefore, request that you will be so good as to invite those of your members who are interested in this subject to appear before the Committee, and that you will kindly intimate to me as early as possible the names of those who express their willingness to attend. I enclose 20 copies of a note of the subjects of enquiry by the Committee.

No. 186—0.

From—The Secretary, Indian Tea Association,

To—The Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

I am directed by the General Committee of the Indian Tea Association to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter No. 60, dated 24th March 1906. In reply to the invitation which you were good enough to extend to the members of the Association, I am instructed to say that the following gentlemen will be glad to attend before your Committee and to give evidence on matters relating to the enquiry, *viz.* : —

Mr. Stephen Anderson of Messrs. Williamson, Magor & Co.

„ H. C. Begg of Messrs. Begg, Dunlop & Co.

„ G. Kingsley of Messrs. Shaw, Wallace & Co.

„ W. Warrington of Messrs. Finlay, Muir & Co.

2. Should any other gentlemen express a desire to give evidence I will communicate their names to you at the earliest possible date.

No. 138.—MR. G. KINGSLEY, *Messrs. Shaw, Wallace & Co., Calcutta.*

If the supply of labour does not increase it will mean that there can be no extension of cultivation and probably that some gardens which are not popular with labour will have to close. I think that if Section 90 were extended to districts to which it does not now apply, it would help recruiting very much. I think that coolies object to the *dik* attending registration and to wearing prescribed red coats. Section 90 coolies would also avoid interference by the police, but I think that speaking generally a Section 90 sardar will need a local agent to look after him and some forwarding agency to see to the transport of his coolies. But Section 90 is at any rate a great convenience when the local agent is not at the head-quarters of a district. My information is that in Ranchi the necessity for registration has a deterrent effect. It would practically meet the case if Government gave concessions under Section 91 to certain recognised agencies, exempting their sardars from the necessity of registering coolies. My firm would be satisfied if it received such a concession.

I should like to see the free contractor abolished because he is responsible for most of the abuses which give a bad name to recruiting. But the licensed contractor is a necessity for gardens which have not a sardari connection. I would not press for any relaxation of Section 34, though I quite see that in individual cases it may work hardly and prevent the emigration of women who are quite willing to go to Assam and to whose going there is no real objection.

If the four years' contract is a deterrent, I would be prepared to reduce the term to three or even to two years, but this would not succeed if the supply did not increase and the price of the coolie accordingly decrease. I would, however, be prepared to give it a trial. I think that coolies who were going to settle down would decide to do so after two years. But if the coolie is not under contract at first I think that he will be apt to move on from mere love of change. I think that the industry should aim at the introduction of free labour; with this in view I should approve of the abolition of the local penal contract. I think that it is a good idea that the coolie after two years' service should receive a bonus which would enable him to visit his home if he wished.

I consider that it would be advisable to give a higher wage in return for some concession in the matter of supplying rice. This year we are losing ₹1-8 to 1-12 a maund on rice. I should have no objection to having a daily wage entered in the contract. I also think it possible to raise wages, at the same time raising tasks. As far as I know there is nothing inherent in the conditions in Assam to prevent it paying the same wages as Ceylon does. What does prevent this is the present high price of importing labour and the loss on rice in a year when prices are high.

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I would not be in favour of dividing the recruiting area into two parts keeping one exclusively for free labour; I think that the change would be too sudden. I would prefer to arrive at free labour by forbidding the renewal of the penal contract in Assam. Whatever can be saved in the present cost of recruiting we should gladly pay to the coolie in the form of wages.

If the Act were abolished, wealthy companies would still pay a good price for imported labour; the price would sink but not to the Duars level. Assam is more distant than the Duars and less healthy and will therefore never be so popular. I judge of the comparative healthiness by the garden expenditure on medicines and hospitals.

If Government goes in for colonization of land in close proximity to gardens we should like to have some assurance that garden coolies will not be attracted away. I would not have land given to the time-expired coolie except with the consent of his employer.

In my opinion the abolition of the Act in the Surma Valley alone will scarcely affect that Valley and will have no effect at all on the Assam Valley.

It is not possible, where interests are so diverse, to expect that all employers will combine in one recruiting organisation. I do not think that the deputation of a Government officer would do much to encourage emigration to Assam; the root of the matter is to make Assam more attractive.

I should say that the right of private arrest does not deter intending emigrants, but I consider that Sections 195 and 196 are essential and without them the Act would be of very little use. I do not think that it would be a workable substitute to appoint honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants.

No. 139.—Mr. S. G. Anderson, *Messrs. Williamson, Magor & Co., Calcutta.*

My firm is agents for a number of tea gardens chiefly in Assam. There is a general belief that recruitment by garden sardars would be more successful but for the interference of police officials and zemindars, and the idea is prevalent that Government do not combat this opposition as they might do. Government should make it widely known that emigration to Assam is not tabooed and that sardari recruitment ought to be encouraged.

I consider that the contractor system must be retained, although I should have no objection to the withdrawal of the free system which is in force in certain districts of Bengal. I have no suggestions to offer as to amending Chapter III of the Act so as to help contractors. As regards garden sardars I should like to see Section 90 extended to all districts, or better still Section 92. I consider that local agents and forwarding agents will always be necessary in sardari recruiting. If the general extension of Section 92 recruitment to all garden sardars is considered open to objection, I should be prepared to accept an extension of its privileges to specified agencies or associations of employers by notification under Section 91.

I should have no objection to stating the wage as a daily wage in the emigrant's contract if it is clearly specified that the wage can be earned only for a completed task. I do not think that it would be advisable to shorten the term of contract. If the coolie were taken up on a two years' contract it would mean that he would never settle down at all. If there is a general feeling in the recruiting districts that the emigrant should be given greater facilities for returning to his home, it might be a good thing to repatriate him at the end of his four years' contract, but I do not see how the tea industry can bear the cost. If with the same object it were arranged that there should be no local contract in Assam, the labourer being free at the end of his period of indenture, I should not personally object to such a step, in the hope that it might lead to people going more readily to Assam.

I am of opinion that it would be impossible to give an enhanced wage to the labourer, in order to make people more willing to emigrate to Assam; the gardens simply could not afford to do it. From what I have myself seen I consider that the coolie is very well off in Assam; he is comfortable and well cared for. If Government would let it be known that the conditions on the gardens are favourable, I think it would have an excellent effect.

I should be in favour of a scheme of colonization by Government, if steps are taken to prevent new settlements drawing off labour from the gardens.

I do not see how Sections 195 and 196 of the Act can be withdrawn. But I would not object to their withdrawal, if Government would give the planter some other practical means of recovering absconders. For instance, if a few planters of standing were made honorary magistrates, it might meet the requirements of the case.

The withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will hurt Assam. If a man can go to Cachar without being questioned by the magistrate, he will naturally prefer this. The formalities which will still attach to Assam recruitment will be much against labour going to that Valley.

11th April 1906.

No. 140.—Mr. W. Warrington, *Messrs. Finlay, Muir & Co., Calcutta.*

The supply of labour to Assam has decreased mainly owing to (*a*) increased demand

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for the labour nearer the recruiting districts owing to the rapid development of the Province of Bengal, (*b*) the larger area under tea in Assam, and (*c*) the opposition of Government officials in the recruiting districts to emigration to Assam.

The first two causes can be counteracted to a certain extent by opening out new recruiting areas. I refer especially to the Chota Nagpur and Orissa Native States and the closed areas in Madras. I think Government might apply some pressure to the Native Chiefs to induce them to allow recruiting in their territories.

If the Act were repealed the contractor would still be necessary for a time and would be master of the situation as at present. He would in all probability get much the same prices for free coolies that he now gets for contract coolies. Act or no Act, so long as it is necessary to employ contractors there will be abuses connected with recruiting. The average cost of a depot coolie has remained fairly steady at ₹120 per adult landed on the garden, during the past decade; but allowing for abscondings, deaths, etc., the cost will work out at from ₹200 to ₹240 a head. If all contractors were placed under Chapter III there would probably be a considerable diminution in the supply of depot coolies which would lead to a still further rise in their cost. It is no doubt desirable in the abstract to control contractors as much as possible, but speaking as an employer in want of labour I would prefer to leave things as they are for the present. It is problematical whether the licensing of contractors would tend to assist sardari recruiting.

There are many estates in the Upper Brahmaputra Valley whose labour forces could not be kept up to a proper level without the aid of the Act. These are the very gardens which are dependent on contractors.

I attach no importance to Sections 195 and 196 as far as the effect they may have on recruiting work is concerned. I doubt whether 90 per cent. of the intending emigrants know that the right of private arrest exists under Act VI. I think it is an excellent suggestion that leading planters should be appointed honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants against absconders, and if this could be arranged I should have no objections to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196.

The promise to repatriate labourers at the expiry of their contract would no doubt be an additional inducement in some cases to emigrate, but I do not think that the concession would be taken advantage of to any extent. Time-expired labourers prefer to take up rice land in Assam and settle down there.

The only scheme of colonization which would meet with the general approval of the planting community would be one under which the estate would act as landlord and the coolie become a sub-tenant of the estate, and in return for holding land on easy terms would give an undertaking to work on the estate for so many days in each month.

I do not think it necessary or advisable to raise the rate of pay. The really good coolie can now earn additional money but most coolies only aim at earning a fair living wage and if wages were raised we should merely have to keep more coolies to do the same amount of work, which would add greatly to our expenses. I doubt whether increased wages would induce men to come to the gardens for a short period with the object of saving as much money as they could and then returning home. I do not think that we could get such men in the face of superior attractions nearer home. If coolies came up for short periods, it would be necessary that they should be on the garden from June to November when we most want labour, but unfortunately these are the very months in which they would be looking after their own crops. If we could get them for that season and discharge them at the end we could afford to pay them a higher rate of wages and it would, of course, be greatly to our own benefit, as with a full muster we could harvest larger crops and of better class tea.

Garden sardars should be allowed every facility; even Section 90 is unnecessarily restrictive. I would have every sardar properly licensed in the labour districts as a fit and proper person to recruit labour and then let him recruit without any formalities or interference at all.

If the Act is withdrawn only from the Surma Valley, recruitment for the Assam Valley will probably be prejudicially affected, for a time at least. But I do not oppose the proposal, and Cachar and Sylhet would soon work quite independently of the Upper Assam Valley in the way that the Duars gardens now do.

It is, however, probable that the double system of recruitment will afford an opening for abuses, and if so it may be necessary to forbid the execution of local contracts under Act VI in Assam. My personal opinion is that there would be no objection to the abolition of local Act VI contracts.

I see no objection to stating the wages in the contract as a daily wage, especially as we have introduced and are introducing the daily ticket system on our gardens.

No. 141.—Mr. H. C. Begg, *Messrs. Begg, Dunlop & Co., Calcutta.*

My firm are Secretaries to the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. The Association has been in existence for about 27 years, and practically all the firms in Calcutta procure their labour through it. The Association is mainly concerned with sardari recruiting. After

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the Labour Commission of 1896 I tried to get all firms to join a Central Agency but the attempt failed and I believe that any similar attempt would fail again. The thing could only be done by legislation; if Government would legislate all difficulties would be removed. I should much like to see all Assam recruiting entrusted to some Central Agency, as it would atonce reduce the cost of importing labour. The Central Agency should be empowered to license all contractors; and thereby be in a position to control the rates paid to them, and all sardari recruiting should also be controlled by the Agency. Such an Agency controlling the recruiting by contractors would go far towards extinguishing existing abuses.

Before 1881—so far as I know—there was no difficulty about getting a sufficient supply of labour; in those days all the contractors were in Calcutta. Difficulty began to arise when contractors started work in the mofussil in the early eighties. The free contractor system sprang up with the passing of Act I of 1882. From the eighties there was a great expansion of tea cultivation and consequently an increased demand for labour; and this constantly growing demand has naturally led to greater competition for the available labour.

The demand for labour by other industries especially coal mines and railways has increasingly competed with Assam. Famine and plague have also diminished the permanent supply of labour.

I do not consider that the four years' penal contract and the right of private arrest by the employer have tended to diminish the supply of labour to Assam; I think that the general willingness of time-expired coolies to re-engage for a further period shows that there is no objection to the four years' contract. But if the shortening of the term of the contract would increase the number of emigrants I would not oppose a reduction of the term to three years. I do not think that the provision of Sections 195 and 196 are known in the recruiting districts; at the same time I would not oppose the repeal of those sections, provided the industry got some corresponding concessions, such as that the police should be authorized to arrest on receipt of a telegram, and that honorary magistrates should be appointed in each district with power to issue warrants. We hear a good deal of the unpopularity of Assam, but that unpopularity I consider is instilled into the minds of the ignorant classes that otherwise would be perfectly willing to go there, by professional agitators, railway police and others.

I am convinced that if the whole Act were repealed there would be a recrudescence of abuses in the recruiting districts; these abuses still prevail under Act VI owing chiefly to the free contractor system.* If the Act is repealed I think that we should be more than ever at the mercy of the free contractor because sardari recruiting would become impossible; the contractor would still be able to fix his own prices and the tendency would be for prices to rise.

* I have a strong conviction that the framers of Act VI never contemplated the use of Section 92 by free contractors, and I think I am right in saying it was not until some time after the Act came into force they discovered they could, owing to the loose wording of the section, make use of it.

Any substantial rise in wages would lead to the closing of half the gardens in Assam. The increased wages provided by Act VI of 1901 have not improved the supply, which shows that any moderate increase which the industry could afford will not affect the question. If wages are raised tasks would have to be raised proportionately. I have not gone into the question, but except the greater cost of importing labour and the disadvantage of greater distance from markets, I know of no reason why Assam should not pay the same wages as Ceylon.

I am in favour of giving every assistance to sardari recruiting and would for that purpose have Chapter V extended to all districts where sardari recruiting is in operation, while all contractors should be brought under Chapter III. The contractor cannot for the present be dispensed with altogether. I would allow the arkati to recruit only in a particular area under a yearly license and he should be compelled to keep a register of all his recruits, such register to be inspected by Government officers; each arkati should have his own rest-house, from which coolies should not be removed till passed by a magistrate.

I think that free recruiting for the Surma Valley will prejudicially affect recruiting for the Upper Assam Valley and I do not think it possible to have the two systems working side by side in the same recruiting district; I think coolies recruited for Sylhet might be brought up for Assam. I have known of a batch of coolies on their way to the Duars being got hold of by an Assam contractor. I can hardly believe the planting community of the Surma Valley are alive to the fact that, under Chapter V of Act VI of 1901, they can import labour with almost perfect freedom and am at a loss to understand the desire to relinquish the protection that the Act provides them for all the expense they are put to in procuring the labour for their gardens and keeping a hold on it once they have got it there.

No. 142.—*Note submitted by* Mr. M. Mackertich, Jr., *Licensed Contractor, Calcutta.*

The following are my replies to the questions suggested in the Committee's Circular, dated 15th February 1906:—

(*a*)—It is difficult to point to any special section of Act VI and to say that this or that one is detrimental to the recruitment of coolies. The Act as a whole

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seems to have this effect, and one of the objects for which it was passed, *viz.*, to cheapen the cost of labour, has not been attained. Working expenses of recruiting agencies, whether sardari or contractors', have remained the same, and in many instances have increased, but the number of coolies recruited has fallen off. The cost per head for agency expenses alone has consequently run up.

District officers have different ideas as to the manner in which the sections of the Act should be interpreted. In many instances they are distinctly antagonistic to garden sardars and recruiters. This naturally places too much power in the hands of the police, who as a rule have to conduct all enquiries. In some places where every coolie presented for registration is sent to the police for enquiry, the recruitment of coolies is impossible. I have had to close my Midnapur agency on this account and some of my other agencies are in almost as bad a condition. In all these places my recruiters have given up their licenses and taken to free recruiting for agents working under Section 92.

Act VI further handicaps contractors (1) through the excessively high fees paid for the licenses of those employed by them. During the past 5 years I have paid nearly ₹5,000 as license fees for myself, my sub-contractors and recruiters. (2) Through the expensive depots and rest-houses that have to be kept up and the frequent additions and alterations necessary to these places, owing to the fact that the accommodation which one officer may consider quite suitable is at times objected to by his successor and an alteration or addition has to be made. I have spent over ₹10,000 during the past five years for rent, repairs and alterations to the depot I have in Calcutta and the rest-houses I maintain in my mofussil agencies. Besides the above, owing to the difficulties presented by the Act I have to keep an efficient staff of assistants to direct and help my recruiters, and my establishment therefore costs me over ₹12,000 per annum. This brief account of my expenses will give the Committee some idea of what contractors have to spend to procure coolies under Chapter III of Act VI, apart from the commission they have to pay recruiters.

The four years' contract.—The period of service is, I admit, at times a difficult matter to deal with when trying to induce a coolie to emigrate; with a little persuasion, however, this may be got over. The jungly class of coolies who make the best tea-garden labourers, as a rule, have a very hazy idea of the difference between contract and free labour; and as to the right of private arrest they know absolutely nothing at all about it.

(*b*)—The establishment of a system of free labour, if unrestricted, is, I am much afraid, very likely to bring in the abuses that were prevalent 5 years ago. Even now cases have come to my knowledge where a coolie, whose registration under Chapter III is refused owing to some fancied irregularity, is taken away as soon as he is released by the licensed recruiter by a free agent's man and sent away to the labour districts without any trouble; and very often, to escape detection in case of search, especially in the case of single females, the emigrant's descriptive particulars are entirely changed. This is a very serious abuse and yet there are worse cases than this, as coolies are often taken away against their wishes. Moreover in the majority of the cases these so-called free coolies know nothing of the terms of their service or what work they will have to do.

Furthermore, there is no doubt agents and their men working under the provisions of Section 92 interfere with the work of garden sardars and licensed recruiters. Unscrupulous men of the two latter classes are just as likely to make over their recruits to free agents, as for free arkatis to make over their coolies to garden sardars and recruiters. An unhealthy competition is thus created which raises the cost of coolies.

If free emigration is established, let it be free in every sense of the word. Let the coolies go up to the labour districts free of all binding engagements and let them remain free on the gardens. Employers should not place these coolies under contract of any sort.

(*c*) 1.—If Act VI is repealed some other more popular and workable measure will have to be enacted with power to officials to assist emigration and not obstruct it. If there is no emigration law there would be nothing to prevent any one sending coolies to the labour districts, and unless these emigrants are free and remain so on the gardens, some of the worst abuses that were prevalent in years gone by will recur again.

(*c*) 2—5—Are matters for the consideration of planters and the Government. I am of opinion that the promise of a grant of land would be a great incentive to those coolies who emigrate in families such as the people from the East Coast districts.

(*d*) 3.—I venture to think that the withdrawal of recruitment by contractors will not reduce the cost of importing coolies, but on the other hand a source of supply

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would be stopped which would cause a scarcity of labour. From the Bengal Emigration Reports, Statement of Embarkations from Goalundo, it will be seen that from 1901 to 1905 22,580 contractors' coolies were shipped to Assam, Cachar and Sylhet. Furthermore, a reference to statements which I have prepared of coolies sent by me to the different tea gardens and taken by Calcutta firms during the past 11 years will show that many employers have been taking coolies regularly year after year. If their names do not appear in my lists during one or two years, this does not imply that they have stopped taking contractors' coolies altogether. In most cases these firms have transferred their patronage to another contractor.

I am not averse to the suggestion of placing all contractors, in parts where Section 92 is in force, under Chapter III of the Act. But if it is intended to have a separate Superintendent of Emigration for every district, it would mean that a contractor who at present has only a rest-house in a district, will have to maintain a fully equipped depot there, besides having to pay a fee of ₹100 for a contractor's license for every such district. I am afraid this would not conduce to lessen the cost of recruitment in the least.

(*e*) and (*f*).—I do not anticipate any trouble in recruiting coolies for the Upper Assam Valley if the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley districts.

No. 143.—*Note submitted by* Dr. C. Banks, M.D., *Superintendent of Emigration, Calcutta.*

I.—If I were asked to formulate a scheme under which it might be possible to obtain a sufficient supply of labour for Assam, I would first of all endeavour to satisfy myself as to whether Assam is a desirable place to emigrate to from—

(*a*) the point of view of health, housing, medical attendance, cost of living, etc.;

(*b*) wages;

(*c*) nature of work, task and days and hours of labour;

(*d*) treatment received by emigrants at the hands of employers and planters;

(*e*) inducements held out to those who may wish to settle there.

II.—If satisfied on these points the next question that would suggest itself would be, "How are the inducements offering to be made known to those who might wish to go?" I would suggest the following means:—

(*a*) The circulation of notices and leaflets approved by Government stating all the facts, and only facts, and also that healthy people only are wanted.

(*b*) By getting well-known and influential residents of villages, missionaries and others to help.

(*c*) By employing recruiters to work under duly appointed agents.

III.—The next question would be, "What means might be employed to encourage voluntary emigration?" The following might be useful:—

(*a*) Besides paying the cost of the journey to Assam, a *bonus* equal to three months' wages, not to be deducted from wages earned afterwards, might be given.

(*b*) An endeavour should be made to have a continuous demand for labour all the year round.

(*c*) The encouragement of family emigration, all members of a family to be sent to the same garden.

(*d*) The selection of promising fields for recruitment and no prohibited areas.

(*e*) A few selected emigrants, who have no cause to complain about either the treatment received in Assam or the success achieved, should be sent back at times to their native villages to report themselves to their friends and try to induce them to go to Assam with them.

(*f*) An offer of land, or a *bonus* at the end of their indentures if they go under contract.

(*g*) Repatriation at the end of their service if under contract, not otherwise, if they cannot be induced to stay longer.

(*h*) Good wages, cheap and wholesome food, thereby enabling the thrifty to lay past something.

(*i*) Let it be optional for the employers to take either contract or free labour, and let the emigrants decide after everything has been carefully explained to them whether they will enter into a contract or go free.

(*j*) If contracts are entered into let them be for as short a period as possible and for not longer than perhaps two years. No doubt if they find things to their liking at the end of their period they will be quite willing to renew their agreements.

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The following extract from the Report of the Emigration Agent for British Guiana on Chinese Emigration, 1875, may be of some interest in this connection:—

> "Free emigration conducted on such an extensive scale as it is in Hong-Kong, presents so many attractions and inducements to the Chinaman that contract emigration has no chance working side by side with it except at a cost which the Colonies cannot bear. The Hong-Kong Emigration Rules and the last consolidating enactment on the subject shew how few and inexpensive are the requirements for voluntary emigration, as compared with the expense and elaborate machinery for supervising contract emigration."

IV.—Form of contract.

When it is deemed desirable to place the intending emigrants under agreement the form of contract adopted should indicate:—

(*a*) the terms of the agreement in other languages besides English;

(*b*) the nature of the work which the men and women respectively shall be called upon to do, and here I would observe that it appears to me that a woman who does as much work as a man should receive the same pay as a man.

V.—Restrictions which should be imposed in the matter of recruitment.

(*a*) No persons should be allowed to recruit labourers or supervise the work of recruiters who are not approved by the local authorities. Recruitment might be done either by the Tea Districts Labour Supply or other Associations, and the labour distributed by them amongst the gardens employing them, or by recruiters employed by individual gardens.

(*b*) Every intending emigrant should be produced before a district officer, medically examined, registered and placed under contract, if a contract be agreed upon, after their antecedents have been enquired into and no wrong name or other false information appear to have been given, and it is shown that the person has not been induced to agree to go to Assam by any coercion, undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation or mistake.

(*c*) If rejected, the intending emigrant should receive compensation and be sent back to his home.

(*d*) Statements giving the particulars of the emigrants registered should be sent from the various districts for record in a Central Office, preferably that of the Protector of Emigrants, Calcutta, as is required in the case of Colonial emigrants, so that there may be no difficulty in tracing emigrants about whom enquiries may afterwards have to be made.

(*e*) Let a fee per emigrant be charged to defray the cost of Government supervision.

(*f*) The usual places of accommodation would have to be maintained, and while the people are in those places they should be allowed to go and come as they like during daylight.

(*g*) Intending emigrants should be allowed three days' time after registration within which to change their minds and refuse to go to Assam under any conditions.

VI.—Disadvantages of free recruitment.

(*a*) There are very few *bonâ fide* volunteers.

(*b*) When they are got it is difficult to keep them.

(*c*) When advances are given before any contract is signed, they may refuse to go after they have spent the money in gambling and other ways.

(*d*) Desertions at the place of destination.

DARJEELING, 20TH APRIL 1906.

No. 144.—THE HONOURABLE MR. SLACKE, *Member of the Board of Revenue, Bengal.*

I was Settlement Officer of the Chota Nagpur Division from 1884 to 1888 and afterwards Commissioner of the Division from 1902 to 1905. Recruitment for Assam in 1884-1888 was largely done through free recruiters, and there was a good deal of villainy connected with the system. At present Chota Nagpur is closed to recruitment except under Chapters III and IV of Act VI of 1901, and there are very few complaints about irregularities in recruitment. It is well known that the free contractors at Raniganj and Midnapur take coolies from the notified districts. It is impossible to stop this unless the districts surrounding Chota Nagpur are also notified. This I should like to see done if the Act is to remain in force.

In my opinion the supply of labour in Chota Nagpur which might be available for Assam will go on diminishing year by year unless in time of famine or in case of a political rising. During the next three years some 20 lakhs is to be spent on unskilled labour alone in the

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Ranchi and Manbhum districts on the Purulia-Ranchi Railway and the new Government buildings at Ranchi. Then there are the iron-works which are to be opened at Sini. The lime works at Bisra in Gangpur offer good wages and are extending and will employ a good deal of labour before long. The proprietor offers 4 annas to local men and 3 annas to women and is even now finding difficulty with his labour and has to import work-people. The timber works in Gangpur and Bonai are also attracting more labour year after year. The country is being opened out rapidly and it will soon be impossible for Assam to get labour without offering a wage which can compete with that given by the local industries. The coal mines are unpopular with the vast majority of Chota Nagpur people, but this is being gradually overcome, although slowly. As they get accustomed to the work, more and more people will go to the mines because of the good wages offered and the freedom they enjoy; they need work only when they like and can return when they please.

The exploitation of Chota Nagpur will tell first on Assam and to a lesser degree on the Duars, that is, if the penal contract is retained in Assam. The Chota Nagpur coolie does not think much of working to save money: he thinks only of the present. If the Committee have found in the Duars gardens that a large percentage of the coolies do not go to work every day, it is exactly what the Chota Nagpuri likes. There will always be a movement outside Chota Nagpur during the slack season of the year from December to May. The people are poorly off and must go outside to get a living. But this does not mean that they want to amass money; they merely want to provide for the actual present, and they will only work enough for this.

I do not see that Assam can expect to get labour on present conditions; there is the great local demand to which I have referred, and the labourer who goes to Assam has to stay there for 4 years and work 6 days in the week. Unless Assam can give some inducements which it does not offer at present, I see no chance of its getting a better supply of labour. If Assam would do without a penal contract and guarantee to pay the way back of any man who had worked for a stated period, I think that might have some effect. I would also suggest that the planters should come to terms with some of the influential missionaries in Chota Nagpur who might arrange for the emigration of their Native Christians to Assam. There are large numbers of Native Christians in Chota Nagpur. The missionaries should of course be allowed to work outside the Act.

If the Act were entirely abolished I am of opinion that you would have abuses again. The coolie will always be worth a price, and so long as this is the case, you will find people ready to go in for all the old malpractices. Even without a contract of any kind, I believe the coolie would be worth money landed in Assam; he would be stranded in a distant country without resources and could not get back to his home. I have long been of opinion that the best system would be to do away with recruitment by contractors altogether and recruit only through garden sardars through a Central Agency. This would do away with the competition which now exists, there would be no temptation to sardars to act dishonestly, and there would be efficient control.

When the Act is withdrawn from Cachar and Sylhet, I do not see how it will be possible to prevent the unscrupulous arkatis who exist on every side from setting to work to recruit for Cachar and Sylhet and then selling their coolies for Assam. I do not think that any checks you may have will get over this difficulty. With the price which the coolie will fetch in Assam, there will always be people prepared to run coolies through to Assam, and it will be very hard to catch them.

Note on a visit to the Duars.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSAM LABBOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

IN THE

DUARS.

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NOTE ON A VISIT TO THE DUARS.

Duars.

The members of the Committee paid a visit to the Duars on the 16th, 17th and 18th April 1906, Messrs. Robertson, Gordon and Bompas visiting the Eastern Duars and Mr. Milne and Captain Kennedy the Western Duars. The following is a summary of the information kindly supplied by the tea garden managers whom the members met at various centres.

Recruitment of Labour.

The system of recruitment is fully described in paragraph 4 of Mr. Arbuthnott's Report, and an account of the methods followed will be found in the statements recorded by the Committee, which are appended to this note.

Managers generally report an improvement in recruiting in the past two years. This year results are particularly favourable in the Santal Pergannas, where there was some failure of crops. The following are notes furnished by different gardens visited.

I. Labour force quite sufficient; this year 26 recruiters brought up 82 coolies from Chota Nagpur.

II. Labour force ample; has had no difficulty in obtaining labour from Chota Nagpur, and has done so well this year that it will probably not be necessary to recruit any labourers next year.

III. Garden not very popular with coolies as the soil is stiff and water scarce; this year got 30 coolies from Chota Nagpur as against 90 last year, but recruited 73 Santals as compared with 28 in previous season. Out of 25 recruiters only 4 brought back coolies from Chota Nagpur. Poor results attributed partly to recruiters having been too long on the garden and having therefore lost touch with their villages.

IV. Garden fully supplied with labour; manager had to wire to stop a challan of 47 coolies a few days ago from the Santal Pergannas, as he was full up.

V. Group of nine gardens well supplied with labour. Results of season's recruiting in Chota Nagpur fair. Santal Pergannas recruiting has been very successful. On one of the gardens in the group it has been found difficult to get Santals to stay on the garden, as it is at a distance from other gardens employing Santal labour.

The general impression amongst managers is that it is becoming harder to obtain coolies from Chota Nagpur. One of the recruiting reports shown to the Committee remarks on the competition for labour in the Ranchi district, due to the railway construction work. Reference is also made to the extensive building work about to be carried out at Ranchi, and the opinion is expressed that "recruiting has been adversely affected to a certain extent owing to these works and that it will be still more so and in a considerably extended area next season." Hazaribagh and Palamau coolies are considered unsatisfactory, and in these districts coolies often come forward and receive advances with which they decamp. To meet this some gardens have introduced a system of credit notes signed by the recruiting agent for railway fares, which has proved successful.

Coolies are now brought up by rail, instead of coming by road. There are very few desertions on the journey. When the coolies came by road they received an advance, generally R4 a head, for their expenses on the journey, and challans frequently arrived as much as 20 per cent. short. Now they are supplied with railway tickets either under the credit note system, or tickets are taken for them by the recruiting agent if the recruiting centre is near the railway. Some gardens pay half the cost of the railway journey, and only half is recoverable from the coolies. The month spent in walking to the Duars was an advantage to the garden, as coolies are not wanted early in the year, but all gardens have had to take to the railway which is preferred by the coolie.

Duars. The depletion of Chota Nagpur, which was for many years the chief Duars recruiting ground, has led managers to look elsewhere for their labour. The Santal Pergannas is now being extensively drawn upon, but so far recruiting has been mainly confined to the northern portion of the district.

One group of gardens about four years ago made an experiment with labour from Madras, but it was a hopeless failure. The coolies could not stand the climate. It is understood that they came from the neighbourhood of Madras and were many of them towns-people. They were supplied by a contractor.

Cost of recruitment.

Except that half the cost of the railway journey is now being paid by many of the gardens, there has been no change in the methods of recruitment employed and in the system of recovery of advances described by Mr. Arbuthnott. The cost per head rises in a year when recruitment is poor and falls when it is good. This year, recruiting having been good, the average expenditure charged to the garden will generally be smaller than it was two or three years ago. The cost to the garden ordinarily consists of (1) the pay of the Assistant Manager or Babu sent down to the recruiting district and his staff of chuprassis, (2) the half of the railway fare, where this is paid by the garden, and (3) the commission or bonus which is paid to the recruiter on the coolies he brings up; on some gardens deferred pay is given instead to the recruiter, if his coolies have stuck to the garden; others pay a bonus and a month's pay as well. But the general practice on gardens which have no difficulty over their labour is to give the recruiter no pay and allow him only a bonus of R2 per coolie recruited.

It will be seen that all gardens do not adopt the same system, and the actual expenditure charged to the garden, apart from recoverable advances, is by no means uniform. The following examples are given :—

I. Labour recruited this year has cost a garden R1-14-0 per head in the case of Chota Nagpur coolies and R4-14-7 in the case of Santals. To the Chota Nagpur figure has to be added a commission of R3 per head to a local agent at Ranchi for looking after the recruiters down there. Recoverable advances come to R14-1-0 and R5-8-4 for the two districts respectively. All last year's advances have been recovered.

II. A garden gets its labour without any agency in the recruiting districts; does not pay railway fare of coolies. Only cost to the garden is a commission of R2 per head paid to the recruiter in the case of Chota Nagpur coolies and R1 per head in the case of Santals. The recruiter also gets one month's pay. This garden has written off only about R200 irrecoverable advances in 14 years.

III. Mr. Lowe's statement regarding recruiting in the Santal Pergannas for the Consolidated Tea and Lands Co., is appended. Average cost to the gardens was last year R8-8-10 and this year R5-13-10. But the recruiter also gets a month's pay whether he has brought up coolies or not, two months' pay if he has brought up 5 coolies and three months' pay if he has brought up more than 5. This is paid at the end of six months, as also a bonus of one rupee for every coolie recruited who is then on the garden.

IV. Three years' figures for two gardens; they include the pay of the recruiter during his absence in the recruiting districts.

Chota Nagpur.

Seasons.	Average advances per coolie recruited, recoverable from the coolie.			Average expenses per coolie recruited, including recruiter's pay, paid by the garden.		
	R	A.	P.	R	A.	P.
1904 . . .	12	2	3	6	11	2
1905 . . .	15	12	8	11	15	0
1906 . . .	12	15	0	8	6	5

Santal Pergannas.

	R	A.	P.	R	A.	P.
1903 . . .	20	4	0	17	12	9
1904 . . .	14	5	5	15	13	10
1905 . . .	10	1	11	15	7	10

V. Three years' figures for group of nine gardens. **Duars**

District of recruitment.	Year.	No. of coolies.	Average advances per head.	Cost irrecoverable per head.
			₹ A. P.	₹ A. P.
Chota Nagpur	1904	945	19 13 6	6 9 10
	1905	706	18 6 2	4 14 4
	1906	613	20 6 3	4 9 7
Santal Pergannas	1904	496	9 6 9	11 2 6
	1905	646	5 12 1	3 5 5
	1906	1,300	4 1 6	4 14 6
Chaibassa	1904	153	13 9 6	9 6 10
	1905	111	14 7 3	7 6 6
	1906	28	11 7 4	12 12 5

The extent to which recoverable advances made to sardars and recruiters have to be written off varies according to the strength of the garden's connection with the recruiting districts. In many gardens the amounts written off are insignificant. In others considerable sums have had to be foregone. The following figures were supplied by two concerns:—

Year.	Amount written off. I	Amount written off. II
	₹	₹
1901	1,857	*Nil*
1902	1,074	*Nil*
1903	346	60
1904	558	63
1905	321	476

In the first case there were large outstandings from previous years which were settled up in 1901 and 1902. Managers complain that the only way of recovering an advance which has been given to a coolie who subsequently refuses to go to the garden, is by civil suit.

As showing the extent to which advances are recovered on the gardens, the following example is of interest:—

Year.	Total advances.	Amounts written off.
	₹	₹
1903	4,666	131
1904	6,280	703
1905	5,890	551

Duars.

System of working and payment of labourers.

The system of management of the labour force has been described in paragraph 10 of Mr. Arbuthnott's Report. The commission paid to the sardar has now been almost everywhere fixed at one pice on each task performed. On a group of gardens where the commission was formerly one and a half pice, no objection was raised when the extra half-pice was cut down about a year ago. The coolies prefer as a rule working through their sardars, but with Santal gangs the sardar is often not intelligent enough to keep an account of the working of his gang and the garden keeps individual accounts and pays the coolies direct. On one garden the manager once suspected a Chota Nagpur sardar of cheating his coolies and paid them himself. The coolies returned the money and asked that it might be made over to the sardar.

The Duars manager does not look upon the commission paid to the sardar as being in the main a recruiting charge. Out of it the sardar has no doubt to make good losses which he has sustained in connection with getting coolies for the garden. But the commission further ensures the garden to a considerable extent against loss of labour by desertion; it is to the sardar's interest to keep his coolies on the garden and to recover them if they do go away. If coolies die or abscond, the loss falls on the sardar, not on the garden. When coolies get sick the sardar sees that they are fed and looked after until they recover: beyond the cost of medicines and medical attendance the garden is put to no expense in dieting sick coolies. The sardar supervises the work of his gang; he is himself a coolie and payments made to him cover a number of services and petty accommodations which he performs for the coolies he has under him.

The Duars coolie works generally about 15 to 18 days in the month. The average attendance on one garden visited by the Committee varied from 50 per cent. in August to 68 per cent. in November 1905. The pay the coolie is content to earn will be seen from the following table, which the Committee were informed is fairly representative of a garden employing Chota Nagpur and Santal labour:—

Wages earned each month in 1905.

	Men.			Women.			Children.		
	Haziri.	Extra.	Total.	Haziri.	Extra.	Total.	Haziri.	Extra.	Total.
	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.	R A. P.
January	3 13 6	*Nil*	3 13 6	2 10 5	*Nil*	2 10 5	0 15 4	*Nil*	0 15 4
February	3 14 9	*Nil*	3 14 9	2 9 10	0 9 2	3 3 0	0 15 11	*Nil*	0 15 11
March	3 15 10	*Nil*	3 15 10	2 11 4	0 0 3	2 11 7	1 1 4	*Nil*	1 1 4
April	3 10 8	*Nil*	3 10 8	3 0 2	*Nil*	3 0 2	0 14 9	*Nil*	0 14 9
May	4 8 6	*Nil*	4 8 6	2 12 5	0 0 11	2 13 4	0 13 5	*Nil*	0 13 5
June	4 4 9	*Nil*	4 4 9	2 14 2	1 0 5	3 14 7	0 8 7	0 0 3	0 8 10
July	4 1 9	2 7 6	6 9 3	2 13 11	1 8 5	4 6 4	0 13 10	0 4 8	1 2 6
August	3 13 8	2 1 1	5 14 9	2 13 0	2 0 8	4 13 8	1 6 9	*Nil*	1 6 9
September	3 10 6	1 5 3	4 15 9	2 9 2	1 3 7	3 12 9	1 3 4	*Nil*	1 3 4
October	3 5 4	1 2 6	4 7 10	2 8 4	1 4 5	3 12 9	0 13 8	0 2 5	1 0 1
November	4 3 8	0 2 1	4 5 9	3 2 11	0 11 5	3 14 4	1 2 11	*Nil*	1 2 11
December	4 2 7	*Nil*	4 2 7	2 5 6	0 0 4	2 5 10	0 15 10	*Nil*	0 15 10

NOTE.—The figures represent total wages divided by the number of individuals at work, *i. e.*, of coolies who worked for one or more days during the month.

On another garden in which there was a considerable proportion of Pahari coolies, who are steadier workers, the average pay earned was:—

	R A. P.
Man	6 0 6
Woman	4 12 4
Child	2 6 3

The price of rice is high in the present year, being 7 or 8 seers per rupee as against 10 last year. This has had the effect of making the coolies turn out to work more readily. But the general impression is that the ordinary *jungli* coolie values leave and leisure more than pay, and he only works sufficiently to keep himself in comfort according to his standard. The majority of the coolies stay for two or three years on the garden. In the first year they rarely try to do more than pay off the advances against them. Later they save something before going back to their country. The coolie on coming to the garden is generally able to do his full task within a fortnight of his arrival. In the cold weather the work is as a rule fairly light, and the coolie experiences no difficulty in at once taking his place in the working force.

General.

Duars.

A labour force of one coolie per acre is considered sufficient by most gardens. The daily attendance will be about 60 per cent. of this force. Coolies are willing and well able to do double tasks at hoeing when required. There are large settlements of tea garden coolies in the Duars. As a rule the gardens get very little labour from these settlements. Some of the gardens have rice land of their own, which is made over to the coolies for cultivation on condition that they turn out for garden work when required. No trouble is experienced in enforcing this condition.

The gardens provide medical attendance for their labour force and maintain hospitals, but the coolie dislikes going to hospital, preferring to be treated at his home. Among Chota Nagpur coolies the birth-rate is generally very low for the first two years, but rises when the coolies settle on the gardens. Abortion is said to be practised. One manager ascribed this to the fact that the coolies did not want their children to be born away from their native country. When they returned to their homes suspicion would attach to the progeny.

The coolies in many places prefer to build their own huts. They will often leave the pucca houses provided for them, if they are given permission to run up huts for themselves.

The Duars Labour Rules providing for the return of coolies who have gone to another estate, or the payment of the advance outstanding against the coolie on the garden which he has left, work smoothly and appear to give satisfaction to managers.

No. 145.—Mr. W. F. D. Lowe, *Manager, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Limited, Duars.*

I have been supervising the recruitment of labour for our gardens in the Duars for the last five years. The following statement shows the number of persons recruited in the Santal Pergannas and Monghyr for each year since 1902:—

Year.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total
1902 . . .	191	118	20	329
1903 . . .	Not to hand.			416
1904 . . .	311	201	39	551
1905 . . .	498	349	81	928
1906 . . .	542	375	192	1,109

The average advances per head (two children being counted as one adult) and irrecoverable expenses of recruiting are shown below:—

Year.	No. of recruiters.	No. of persons recruited.	Average per recruiter.	Recoverable advances per head.	Irrecoverable recruiting expenses per head.
				₹ A. P.	₹ A. P.
1905	114	928	8·14	8 3 3	8 8 10
1906	101	1,109	10·99	5 13 6	5 13 10

The advances represent cash and half railway fare advanced in the recruiting district. The only out-of-pocket expenses in recruiting are the cost of the other half of the coolie's railway fare to the Duars (₹1-8), and the salaries of myself, clerk and chuprassis. Occasionally where families are large we pay their full fares. During the present year very few people have become unwilling after being brought in by the sardars; ₹30 would cover my losses on this account. I have had no complaints of arkatis enticing away our sardars' recruits. The only trouble we experience is from the police and ticket collectors. Unless the coolies are accompanied by a responsible chuprassi the people extort money from them.

The recruiters are first sent down, furnished with certificates by the garden, and then I follow. The recruiters then come in to me for first advances, which amount to from ₹5 to ₹20 per head according to the standing of the recruiter, the number of coolies he says he can get and the distance he has to bring them. When I went down at first I toured

Duars.

through the district (Santal Pergannas), but I now remain at Katakund for the payment of the first advances and at Amrapara for the final challaning of coolies. The recruiters generally bring in their coolies to me at Amrapara on market days. I ask the coolies what advances they require and pay any reasonable amount to them up to R5 per head. This money is generally left with relations to pay debts, etc. The emigrants get very little of the advances made to the recruiting sardar, who generally uses the advances for the purpose of making a favourable impression. These advances are debited either against the recruiting sardar or against his principal on the garden. The sardars recoup themselves for the cost of this display out of their commission paid on the earnings of the coolies, and any sums advanced by them to the coolie are recovered from him by the sardar. When a sardar or one of his coolies goes recruiting, he ceases to draw pay from the garden. He receives one month's pay six months after his return to the garden whether he has brought up coolies or not. If he has brought up 5 coolies, he gets two months' full pay, and for over and above 5 coolies he gets three months' full pay. He also receives a bonus of R1 for each coolie recruited by him who is then on the garden. These sums are not included in the figures which I have given above. We occasionally employ local recruiters, who are relatives of people on the gardens, and we pay them a bonus of R2 per coolie landed on the garden.

We used to recruit most of our labour from Chota Nagpur, but as the supply from there has greatly decreased within the last eight years, we have had to work up a connection in the Santal Pergannas. The deputation of a European has proved very satisfactory as will be seen from the figures given. The Santal has no confidence in a Bengali, but trusts a European whom he knows. The Santal is home-loving but improvident, and lays up nothing for a rainy day. It is owing to local scarcity that I am getting so many coolies this year.

The recoverable advance would be shown on the garden books as a debt against the sardar which the garden recovers from him and he in turn from the coolie. As a matter of fact very few of such advances have to be written off as irrecoverable. If the recruiter bolts with his coolies back to his country the garden sardar has no means of recovering the money, so in that case the debt might be written off, but such cases are rare.

Single men and single women remain on the garden for an average of six months, but those who come up with their families often stay for years. I have never had any experience of coolies striking work. They work only from 3 to 4 days a week as a rule. If rice is dear, however, they work more.

If the word "agreement" were mentioned to an intending emigrant, he would not come to us. In fact in those parts of the Santal Pergannas where recruiting for Assam goes on, the people think I want to put them under agreement and object to go. Even though I tell them that they are going up free they are suspicious and demand a higher rate of advance, as much as R20 or R30 per head, than in other parts where Assam does not recruit, as they think they are selling themselves.

On the garden a man's pay is R6 per month and a woman's R4-8. From June onwards the men are allowed to work 'double,' *i.e.*, an extra haziri in the afternoon. Coolies look to working off their advances during this season. A man also may hoe his task in the forenoon, and work overtime in the afternoon plucking, in which case he is paid cash for the plucking work done. Women are paid daily or weekly for all leaf plucked in excess of the task. Some gardens pay a bonus of R1 to coolies who work from 22 to 24 days a month. About 50 per cent. of the adult women earn this bonus. Coolies have to purchase their own rice at market rates. If a labourer leaves the garden with the knowledge of his sardar, arrangements are made to recover his debts, if any, from the garden to which he goes, under the Duars Labour Rules. If, however, he bolts without the knowledge of his sardar, it is the latter's business to trace him and he generally does so.

No. 146.—Mr. R. C. Linton, *Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Duars.*

I have been recruiting in Chota Nagpur for our gardens in the Duars for three seasons. The following are the figures for the last two seasons:—

Year.	Number of recruiters.	Number of coolies recruited.			Total.	Advances recoverable per head.	Cost of recruiting irrecoverable per head.
		Men.	Women.	Children.			
						R A. P.	R A. P.
1904-05 . . .	217	284	142	43	469	20 5 1	9 14 0
1905-06 . . .	189	283	152	39	474	19 12 9	10 6 3

Our recruiting results this year have been somewhat better than last year, but there is, on the whole, an increasing difficulty in obtaining labour from Chota Nagpur. I attribute this to the increased demand for labour for all concerns including tea, and to the consequent depletion of the recruiting districts. Several of our gardens could take a good

Duars.

many more coolies than they have got. The irrecoverable recruiting expenses consist of my pay, and that of the Babus, chuprassis, etc., employed in recruiting. In addition, some gardens within the last year or two have taken to paying half or the whole of the railway fares of coolies who work up to the Durga Pujas. This is not shown in the above figures. Recruiters also receive pay and commission, which vary on different gardens. The highest commission on any of our gardens would be R2 per coolie recruited, and from one to three months' pay is paid to the recruiter according to the number of coolies he obtains.

My duties are chiefly to give advances to the recruiters and to challan the coolies. I do not often visit villages, except when debts are to be paid off, or a dispute between a headman and a recruiter has to be settled. I do not think visiting villages pays as a rule. Recruiters are advanced anything from R10 to R100, probably R30 would be the average. That is the preliminary advance, which depends on the status of the sardar and the security he has left on the garden. Subsequent advances are made principally to pay off the debts of emigrants. We lose very little on advances, for if the recruiter fails, they are recovered from the sardar.

We prefer Chota Nagpur coolies to Santals, and would not take any of the latter, if we could get enough of the former. A Chota Nagpur coolie works more regularly than a Santal. I am certain that putting the coolies under contract would not do us any good, as the people dislike contracts. What they appreciate about the Duars is that they can go backwards and forwards, which we encourage, as we do not want so much labour in the cold weather, and the return of people to their country acts as an advertisement. Coolies who leave in the autumn frequently return with the recruiters in the spring, or perhaps stay at home one season and return the next. Many coolies remain for years on the gardens. I estimate that four-fifths of our labour force is permanent. I have often heard coolies talking of Assam. Their chief objection to the place is that people hardly ever return, and I do not think they love the contract system. I consider that the chief objection is the distance, as people go there and get lost.

DAM DIM, 17TH APRIL 1906.

Dam Dim.

(MR. MILNE AND CAPTAIN KENNEDY *present.*)

No. 147.—MR. W. D. COULL, *Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Dam Dim Division, Duars.*

I have been tea-planting in the Duars for the last 22 years. Within the last few years labour has not been so easily obtainable as formerly. I attribute this to the commercial development of the country, and to the fact that labour is now in great demand for all kinds of concerns. When I came here first we used sometimes to have to turn away coolies. Three years ago we opened out a new connection in Chaibassa. We employed a European agent there, and paid the expenses up and back of labourers who came up to see the place. We entertained them here for from a couple of days to a fortnight. We did this to show them what kind of work they would have to do. They were very suspicious at first, as they thought this place was Assam. In fact, after the people had begun to come up, they bolted in batches of 20 and 30; one night a batch of 59 deserted. They feared that it was Assam. Since then many of the people who deserted have returned, even paying their own way, as they are now convinced that this is not Assam, and that they can come and go as they please. I have now over 400 Chaibassa people on the garden, and only keep one chowkidar to look after them. He is one of their own caste, and is really a messenger between the Babu and myself. They are all good workers, and remit a good deal of money home; I write out the money orders myself. I sent the pay of the absconders to them by money order, and this had an excellent effect in creating confidence.

I have 1,600 acres under tea with a labour force of about 1,900 working coolies. This gives me a daily average of between 1,300 and 1,400 working coolies a day. It is only from six weeks to two months during the *dhan* planting season that we have great difficulty in getting coolies out to work. But even then we never use pressure to make the coolies work. That is the way we keep our coolies; they turn out or stay at home just as they like. I have nearly doubled my labour force within the last four years. I calculate that a quarter of our labour force is fluctuating, and that it requires that number to be recruited annually to keep up a full labour force.

There is very little enticement of labour in the Duars. Coolies move about as they please from garden to garden, just as it suits their humour or convenience, and our losses in this way are generally balanced by our gains. If a coolie leaves in debt, it is recovered under the Duars Labour Rules

The birth-rate among our people is excellent, and the mortality is light, about 3 per cent. We have no in-door hospital, but we have a good doctor Babu and an excellent dispensary and supply of medicines, and the medical arrangements are under European supervision. We attend the coolies in the lines, as they do not like to come to hospital.

Proceedings of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee in the Labour Districts.

The following Note on the subjects of the Committee's enquiry was circulated in the districts of the Assam Valley visited by the Committee.

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

Note on subjects of Enquiry.

THE Government of India in their Resolution No. 1384-15, dated the 20th February 1906, in the Department of Commerce and Industry, have appointed this Committee to examine the question of emigration to the districts of the Upper Assam Valley, more particularly with reference to the conditions that will obtain when Act VI of 1901 is withdrawn from the Surma Valley and the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara. Among the points which the Committee have been directed to investigate are the following :—

(I) The causes which have rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour.

(II) Whether the time has now arrived for withdrawing the Act from the districts of Upper Assam.

(III) Whether, if the Act be withdrawn, a new enactment governing emigration into the Upper Assam Valley will be required, and whether in this case Act XIII of 1859, either in its present form or with modifications, would be suitable.

(IV) What measures should be adopted in order to render service in these districts more popular. The suggestion to withdraw Sections 195 and 196 of the Act, if the latter is retained, should be considered in this connection.

(V) Whether the withdrawal of Act VI of 1901 from the Surma Valley districts will prejudicially affect recruitment for the Upper Assam Valley districts; and if so, to suggest measures calculated to ensure a sufficient supply of labour for these districts, after the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley and Lower Assam Valley districts.

(VI) The possibility of organized recruiting by the Indian Tea Association or by some other body similarly constituted.

The Committee will be glad to receive the opinions of estate managers with regard to these points.

The Committee have now visited all the more important recruiting districts, and have recorded evidence which goes to show that there is a general feeling against emigration to Assam. To this the following causes, amongst others, are said to contribute :—

(*a*) The four years' penal contract, and the impression that emigration to Assam involves loss of freedom to the labourer.

(*b*) The fact that very few emigrants return to their homes.

(*c*) The wages offered in Assam are low, compared with those offered by other industries nearer the coolies' homes. The expansion of railways and the rapid development of the country, which is taking place, are providing extended forms of employment for the labouring classes, and the wages of unskilled labour are almost everywhere rising. It has been frequently remarked that emigrants on the tea-gardens very seldom remit money to their relations, and comparison is made to the disadvantage of Assam with what coolies earn elsewhere.

(*d*) The malpractices of arkatis, particularly before the passing of Act VI of 1901, have given a bad name to Assam. Such abuses are still said to exist in places where there is free recruitment under Section 92 of the Act.

The Committee will discuss these and other objections which have been put forward, at the various centres they visit, but they are desirous that managers should consider what can be done to render service on the gardens more attractive, so as to enable the tea industry to compete on more equal terms with industrial concerns situated in or near the recruiting districts. The following measures have been suggested to the Committee, as being likely to attain this object:—

(1) Abolition of the penal contract or substantial reduction of the term of the Act agreement. If the penal contract be retained, local Act contracts to be done away with, so as to leave the coolie free after his term of indenture is over.

(2) Raising the pay of the labourers, and the statement of the wages offered in terms of daily instead of monthly pay. There is a common belief in the recruiting districts that the coolie is to receive the statutory wage, as if he were an ordinary servant, and the fact that he gets less, if he misses a day, is misunderstood. In order to enable better pay to be offered, a proposal has further been put forward that there should be some increase in the task which the labourer has to perform.

(3) The freer grant of casual leave of absence from work to labourers who wish to take a day off, and generally the easing of those conditions of service on the gardens which coolies find irksome and of which exaggerated accounts find their way to the recruiting districts and so contribute to the unpopularity of emigration to the tea districts.

(4) The grant of land on easy terms to labourers who have served a certain term on the estate.

(5) The offer of repatriation on the expiry of the agreement or after a term of service on the garden, and the grant of leave during the cold weather to selected labourers to enable them to visit their homes.

(6) The abolition of recruitment by contractors, or the notification under Section 3 of areas in which free recruiting under Section 92 is at present allowed.

The Committee are desirous of obtaining the views of managers on these suggestions, and they will be glad if any person who is prepared to accept a modification of the present labour system would formulate a scheme for their consideration and for discussion with representatives of the planting interests.

W. M. KENNEDY,

Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

The 24th April 1906.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

IN THE

LABOUR DISTRICTS.

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DHUBRI, 23RD APRIL 1906.

Dhubri.

The President and Captain Kennedy visited Dhubri and saw Mr. Dunlop, Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara, and Mr. Lyngdoh, Assistant Surgeon, who in the absence of the Civil Surgeon performs the duties of Embarkation Officer. By *Assam Gazette* notification No. 1453-R., dated 25th March 1904, the Eastern Bengal State Railway to Dhubri was declared an alternative route for the conveyance of tea-garden coolies to Assam, and orders for the construction of a depot for their reception were issued by the Government of Assam. It appears, however, that up to date no use has been made of this route by coolies proceeding to the tea-gardens. There is no record of a single Act coolie having passed by this route. There is, however, a large movement through Dhubri of free coolies who go to work on railways, roads, etc., under contractors, especially on the extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

The Members saw two women who had been sent up from Raniganj for employment on a tea-garden and who, on reaching Dhubri, refused to proceed further. They stated that they had gone to Raniganj bazaar where they met a Muhammadan woman who took them to her house to get food, and then offered to send them home by rail, instead of which they were sent to Goalundo and on to Dhubri by steamer, where they complained to the Embarkation Agent.

The Members also examined a petty contractor who was taking back to Allahabad 350 coolies who had been working on the Gauhati extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway. Able-bodied men earned up to 10 and 12 annas a day on brick making and other work. They had come up for the cold weather and were now returning. Asked if any of the coolies would be likely to take work on a tea-garden, he replied that the mention of the word tea-garden would frighten them all.

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GOALUNDO, 24TH APRIL 1906.

Goalundo.

Messrs. Gordon, Milne and Bompas visited Goalundo on the 24th April. The through coolie carriage from Asansole arrived by the 11 o'clock train, having missed the connection at Naihati. It should have arrived in the early morning, so that the coolies might have a rest and a cooked meal in the morning. The carriage misses connection about three days a week. Cooked food is supplied on the steamer and coolies very seldom make any difficulty about taking this; those who refuse have to take dry food. The Assistant Superintendent of Emigration inspects all the coolies and sees that they go by the right steamer. A few refuse to proceed, and the contractor is written to to pay their fares back; if any criminal offence appears to have been committed, the facts are reported to the local magistrate. There are some sheds for the reception of sick and unwilling coolies; repatriated coolies on their way home are also accommodated here. At the time of the Committee's visit there were three women from Midnapur who had been decoyed so far; they had left their children behind them at home and now refused to proceed. There was also a religious *sadhu* from Ranchi, a sardari coolie who had discovered that he would not be allowed to lead a life of religious contemplation on a tea-garden, as the sardar—a relation—had promised.

One family, consisting of a man and his mother and three children, was noticed returning to a garden in Sylhet at their own cost as ordinary passengers; they had been on a two months' visit to Manbhum. There were two other batches of old coolies who had returned to their country and were on their way back to the gardens; one had written for a sardar to come and fetch them, and the other had re-entered the depot from which they had been originally challaned. Some of the contractors' coolies seen were apparently unfit for work on any garden.

Goalundo. The Assistant Superintendent derives his statistics from the forwarding agents' challans, and he would know nothing of coolies going up to the gardens by themselves; but it is believed that the number of these is insignificant.

KALIGHAT, 25TH APRIL 1906.

No. 148.

Sylhet. The Committee interviewed the Reverend J. Jones and Reverend W. E. White who had lived in the Surma Valley for over 15 years. Both of these gentlemen were of opinion that the conditions of life of coolies on the local tea estates were satisfactory, that the hard-working coolie could save money, and that the country was not unhealthy to a man of ordinary physique. The dislike of Assam in the recruiting districts was mainly due to the objectionable methods of the arkati. They thought it very desirable that the poorer classes should emigrate to Sylhet. If people moved freely backwards and forwards between the tea-gardens and the recruiting districts, it would tend to restore confidence, but it was almost impossible for a coolie to make the journey owing to the interference of the police, railway underlings and arkatis. They thought that the abolition of the Act was a move in the right direction. Regular work under a contract was irksome to the coolie at first, but was wholesome in its effect, and made him better able to work for himself afterwards. They had no proposals to make in regard to the amelioration of the lot of the coolie on the tea-gardens. Mr. White proposed that a good officer, who had the confidence of the people, should supervise emigration in the recruiting districts. Sylhet was a rich country, and there was plenty of waste land available for cultivation.

26TH APRIL 1906.

No. 149.—MR. JOHN HENDERSON, *Manager, Phulcherra Division, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Sylhet.*

I have been 16 years in tea in this district. The area of my garden is 1,087 acres and I have a labour force of about 1,400 coolies including children. I have experienced no difficulty in keeping my labour force at about this strength (which is sufficient to work the garden), for the last three years practically without recruiting. Within the past two months, however, I have lost about 40 coolies, who have gone to work on new extensions of other concerns. This is more than I have lost for years. I sent 8 or 10 sardars to Ganjam to recruit last year. They, however, only brought back about 6 coolies. None of these sardars had been less than five years on the garden.

I was in charge of the Deanston Division last year. About 270 contractors' coolies were imported from Bengal. Most of them had been described as first class labourers, whereas they were second class. During the year 72 of these absconded. These coolies cost about R90 each landed on the garden, and I calculate that those who remained cost R140. One of the absconders was sent back about six weeks later under another name from a different depot, costing R5 more than he did the first time. The remaining coolies of the batch were far from satisfactory. Couples come up from contractors' depots as married, when they really are not family people, but have contracted "depot marriages." Very often the men run away and leave their so-called wives.

I have hitherto always sent my sardars to a local agent, but there may be occasions when it might be convenient to dispense with the services of the local agent. We hope that by the withdrawal of the Act and of the restrictions on sardari recruiting, we shall get more coolies. If we do not get sufficient labour through our sardars, I suppose we must still buy coolies from contractors. In that event, I should have no objection to the registration of contractors' coolies before a magistrate, and Government control being kept over contractors in the recruiting districts. We should still continue to give our sardars some certificate to serve as an identification. Advances made to garden sardars in the recruiting districts are not recovered. Some nine years ago North-Westers were tried on the gardens of this neighbourhood, but they did not do well, as they could not stand the climate The country has, however, since been more opened out, and is, I think, healthier, so as a last resort North-Westers might be tried again. I get a certain amount of basti labour, but generally not in August and September, the months in which labour is most required, as they are busy with their crops. I pay them about 25 per cent. more than my ordinary coolies.

My rates of wages are 15 pice for a man and 3 annas for a woman, exclusive of ticca, and I estimate that his cows alone give a coolie R1 a month extra by sale of milk. I think, however, that we soon shall have to consider a rise of wages. I pay my coolies daily by tickets.

My labour force is almost entirely under Act XIII, and the coolies turn out to work regularly. I have never prosecuted any one under Act XIII. I pay R8 bonus on renewal. The contracts are for 313 days. I am satisfied with Act XIII as it is, but would like to see a provision added penalising the enticement or harbouring of coolies by managers. Coolies must have leave. On my garden where I have a full labour force and where the coolies are not

pressed to work, they turn out about 20 or 21 days a month. I am in favour of giving the labourers Act XIII contracts, and I think they like the system as they get the bonus. I consider that a coolie would prefer the bonus at the beginning of the year to one given at the end of the year for good work.

I should like to see a system of sending down certain selected coolies every year to their country for a holiday. I have given out 60 acres of rice land to our coolies to cultivate. I would give them more rice land if I could get it, but there is no more available. I approve of giving coolies land. The offer of land at cheap rates by Government would probably decrease our labour force.

No. 150.—Mr. E. J. Erskine, *Manager, Rajghat Division, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Sylhet.*

I was in the Duars from 1896 to 1898 and since then have been in Sylhet. I do not think it is possible to introduce the Duars system in its entirety into Sylhet; for one thing we are too near Independent Tippera here. I have 200 out of 2,000 coolies under Act VI. I am prepared to see Act VI go but some Act is necessary; I am content with Act XIII. If Act XIII is amended, I should like a clause giving the power of arrest without warrant; I should also like provisions penalizing the enticing of coolies. If honorary magistrates were empowered to issue warrants against absconders, it would meet the difficulty.

My labour force is three quarters Ganjami; they do very well. They cannot do the same amount of extra work as the Duars *jungli* coolie, and that is why a larger labour force is necessary here than in the Duars. I have been getting contractors' coolies from the Central Provinces lately; they are not suited to this district, they abscond and go sick; they become anæmic. Sardars are not successful. Last year I sent down about 20 sardars who brought up about 15 coolies. I think that the arkati should be prevented giving the tea districts a bad name; I would have a close period in which only sardars would be allowed to work. The sardars who have returned merely say that people are not willing to come. Fifteen or twenty years ago sardari recruiting was quite successful for *jungli* coolies: and for years later North-Westers were easily obtained. North-Westers cannot stand the climate here. Coolies are now going in by batches to Hill Tippera where land is being offered on easy terms for sugar-cane cultivation; this began about eight years ago. Many of these absconders are under contract; but it is useless to take out a warrant; they could only be recovered by bribing the Native State officials. I prosecute any whom I can recover; otherwise, I have not to institute cases against my coolies. The agreement deters coolies from absconding to some extent.

The labour difficulty is becoming more and more acute every year. The only remedies I see are opening up new recruiting districts or increasing the wage. An increase in wage would diminish profits, but some gardens could afford it. We never refuse a coolie leave to go to his country, and I would be prepared to assist such coolies with money, in order that they might go home and popularize the tea districts. I am willing that contractors should be controlled even after the abolition of the Act. A month ago I had three young men sent up to Burmacherra from Ganjam, and a fortnight later their parents came to Rajghat in the same division; it was only a fortunate accident that they ever met. Last year I had a woman and two children sent up; she supposed that she was going to rejoin her husband, who had gone to Assam.

We give all our coolies land who apply for it; we have given out already 200 acres, and have more available. I have not told the sardars to let this be known in the recruiting districts. I send our sardar to the local agents of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association. I think that the coolies are more content here with the daily ticket system than if they were paid through sardars as in the Duars. The daily ticket system is very popular; it has been in force for about 12 years.

No. 151.—Mr. R. St. John Hickman, *Manager, Deanston Division, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Sylhet.*

I have been 22 years in tea, over 16 years in Cachar and the remainder of the time here. I have an area of about 2,100 acres under tea with a labour force of 2,500 working coolies, including children. My present labour force is quite sufficient. It consists chiefly of Ganjamis and Telingas, with a certain number of Chota Nagpuris and Santals. I have no North-Westers, they have not been tried since I have been here. Until the last two years I have only recruited through sardars. The number of recruits per sardar varies greatly. People will come to a popular garden, and for such a garden sardars have brought as many as an average of three to four coolies a head recently. I do not think that the abolition of the Act will affect our sardari recruiting, as the coolies are brought up free now. All coolies are given R1 on arrival on the garden. Coolies are charged bazaar prices for rice.

For the last two years I have got contractors' coolies from Ganjam. They have not been very satisfactory. I should like to do without contractors' coolies altogether, and I think it can be done. If, however, we continue to take contractors' coolies, I would have no objection to

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contractors being kept under control as at present; indeed I think it would tend to our protection as well as to that of the coolie. When I get a batch of coolies from a contractor I only expect to get 30 per cent. good labourers out of it.

Coolies here are given leave to visit their homes, when they desire to do so. I consider that labourers should be encouraged to visit their homes. In Cachar we never used Act I of 1882 much—not 2 per cent. of our labour was under it. I consider that some sort of an Act is necessary as the ordinary coolie can give no security for his advance or expenses of importation, and it is especially necessary in a district like this bordering on a Native State, to which coolies are apt to abscond. As a matter of fact, I have not been able to arrest coolies who have gone to Hill Tippera. My coolies are under Act XIII, and in 22 years I have probably not instituted more than half a dozen cases under it. It has, however, a salutary moral effect on the labour force. I consider that Act XIII as it stands is quite satisfactory. I do not suffer much from enticement and do not think that a provision penalising enticement would be of much good. I consider that the abolition of Act VI will benefit the coolie, as he gets the bonus sometimes at once and at any rate for each successive year after the first, and he is really free.

A good stamp of sardari coolie can work level with an old coolie after a month of his arrival on the garden.

No. 152.—Dr. D. Craig, *Medical Officer, Balisera Valley, Sylhet.*

In the south end of the valley North-Westers and some Central Provinces people cannot thrive; in the more open north end they do fairly well. A coolie becomes acclimatised after passing through one rains. 25 per cent. of depot coolies are physically absolutely unfit to have ever been sent to the tea districts, and another 25 per cent. are unsuitable. They arrive on the garden in bad health.

There is a great difference in the birth-rate on different gardens; the annexed statement shews the extent of the variation between two groups of gardens. I think that the low birth-rate is partially avoidable because of the instances of abortion which have come to my notice. At the same time a woman recently arrived is less likely to conceive, until she is acclimatised to a malarious district. One reason for abortion may be that women are living with men who are not really their husbands, and by whom they do not wish to have children. Here women get practically what leave they want for childbirth. I think that in wet weather especially, a woman with a young child should not work, as it is bad for the child to be taken out into the wet. I think that the death-rate among children is lower on the gardens than in the bastis because they get a certain amount of medical attendance and comforts; any woman who asks for milk for her children gets it.

We work the hotel system on the gardens here; feeding costs 2 annas a day at the outside. Sometimes coolies have to be compelled to come to the hotel and sometimes they apply. It is much better that a coolie should exert himself and cook properly instead of going to the hotel.

Anchylostomiasis is prevalent in the gardens here; it is usually worst at the end of the rains, and it is often fatal if it recurs. If coolies arrive in a weakly condition they are very liable to it; a man of average physique can generally be cured by prompt treatment. I think that it is a preventible disease, and that in time a garden can be freed of it, if there is no re-infection.

Statement of Birth and Death-rates on different gardens.

Garden.	1903.		1904.		1905.	
	Birth-rate.	Death-rate.	Birth-rate.	Death-rate.	Birth-rate.	Death-rate.
A	5·1	3·8	3·4	2·1	6·5	3·4
B	7·4	2·2	5·7	1·3	5·3	2·3
C	6·5	1·8	5·5	1·2	4·9	1·1
D	4·7	3·6	4·8	2·2	5·02	1·7
E	6·1	3·06	5·2	2·2	6·8	1·4
F	3·1	4·3	2·9	2·6	2·8	4·1
G	2·7	2·6	2·01	3·6	3·3	6·3
H	3·1	2·7	2·6	3·2	3·2	5·3

Note.—The last three are out-gardens. G and H have imported many contractors' coolies of late years. F has a settled labour force and adjoins bastis and is one of the oldest gardens.

27TH APRIL 1906.

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No. 153.—MR. D. REID, *Baroora Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 21 years in tea, two years of which I spent in the Duars, and the rest of the time in the Sylhet district. I have a labour force of about 1,500 souls, including children, on an area of 1,400 acres under tea. I can also obtain about 250 ex-tea-garden coolies from the neighbouring villages when I want them, even in the rice cultivation season. The villagers get 4 annas a day per 25 *nals* hoeing against 15 pice for 30 *nals*, the rate of my regular coolies. I hoe the garden 5 or 6 times each year. I could do with 100 or so more coolies. A third of my force consists of Bengal coolies, and a third of coolies from Azamgarh. The latter do all right on my garden. I have not been recruiting labourers since Act VI was passed till this year. I sent down 12 sardars this year, 9 of whom have returned with over 89 souls, or an average of about 6 adults each. Most of these came from Monghyr, where recruiting is free. My impression is that the fewer formalities there are in connection with recruiting the better. I have not imported any contractors' coolies, and I have not an Act VI coolie on my estate. The sardars who were sent to Azamgarh have not returned yet. In the old days we used to lend North-West coolies here for R20 or R25 a head.

About three-fourths of my labour force is under Act XIII. The rest are free. Those who ask for an agreement get one. New coolies get full pay, *viz.*, practically R6 for a man and R5 for a woman. Pay was raised to these rates about 7 years ago, from R5 and R4, owing to competition of new gardens, which were being opened out in the neighbourhood. We have 400 acres of rice land let out to coolies. Just at present, as rice is scarce, I am importing rice and selling it to the coolies at cost price. I do not recover the recruiting advances made to sardars. The latter do not get pay for the time they are down. If a sardar returns with more than 3 or 4 coolies, I give him a bonus of R5 per head for men and R4 per head for women. My coolies work about 20 days out of 26. I pay the coolies weekly, and am thinking of starting the daily ticket system, as coolies then know every day what they earn.

A pregnant woman gets as much leave as she wants, generally 4 or 5 months. If the woman is poor, I give her half-haziri, but well-to-do people get nothing. It is to our interest to see that a woman who requires it is supported at this time, and that she is not forced out to work. If women in this condition are turned out to work, the birth-rate goes down and abortions are brought on. I give a rupee to each woman after child-birth. I believe it might pay to give a larger bonus on births, provided Government would pay part of it. Gardens would give a R5 bonus on births, provided Government would give an equal amount. The following statement shows the birth and death-rates for the last 6 years on my division :—

Year.	Population.	No. of Births.	Percentage of Births.	No. of Deaths.	Percentage of deaths.
1900 . . .	3,065	94	*3·06*	61	*2·00*
1901 . . .	2,683	81	*3·01*	59	*2·20*
1902 . . .	2,517	67	*2·66*	46	*1·83*
1903 . . .	2,353	72	*3·06*	34	*1·44*
1904 . . .	2,461	76	*3·08*	34	*1·38*
1905 . . .	2,569	101	*3·93*	38	*1·48*
TOTAL .	15,648	491	*3·13*	272	*1·73*

I am quite satisfied with the abolition of Act VI. I should like to see State-aided emigration, *viz.*, that Government should import labour for the tea industry at cost price, and that, after a period of residence on a tea-garden, a percentage of coolies should be given a cash bonus by the garden and a plot of land on which to settle by Government. I do not think a Central Agency would be an advantage to us, as it would almost certainly be worked from Calcutta for the benefit of Upper Assam and to the detriment of Cachar and Sylhet.

I would be prepared to abolish contractors altogether, but if they are retained I should have no objection to their being kept under control. I do not think that we could afford an increase of pay at present, but if we could reduce the cost of importation, we could offer to pay the coolie a bonus in his own country as an inducement to him to emigrate.

No. 154.—MR. R. T. FRASER, *Sathgao Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been in this district for 18½ years, and have always been on the same garden. My labour force is about 1,150 for 788 acres. This is quite a sufficient force. My people are mainly *junglis* from Chota Nagpur and the Santal Pergannas. I have not recruited any labour for over five years. There has been no movement of coolies from my garden into Hill

Sylhet.

Tippera. I have about 100 acres of *dhan* land, which is held by my coolies. I do not consider that there is a very pronounced scarcity of labour in the Balisera Valley. There is a fair amount of basti labour which comes in occasionally to work on the gardens. I should not say that the coolies on my garden work more than about 20 days a month. The coolies are paid by the ticket system; the tickets are cashed every Sunday by an European. I give three annas for 24 *nals* light hoeing, whether done by a man or a woman. At any time in the year they can make a quarter more than this; in the rainy season they can earn double. The women can earn up to 12 annas in the plucking season by ticca work.

I have nobody under Act VI. I have about 285 coolies under Act XIII advances, but I am making an effort to get clear of agreements of every kind, and save expenditure on bonuses. I perhaps do not get coolies to turn out as well when clear of all agreements, but the difference is very slight. If a coolie has not an agreement, he has generally some other inducement to work in the shape of a piece of land, which is a sufficient hold over him. Of late years I have had several cases of coolies asking for leave to get back to their country. They have practically always returned. They paid their own way. The North-Wester is very keen on getting back to his country; the *jungli* prefers settling down. I think that it is very advisable to encourage labourers coming and going between the garden and their own country. I do not see what inducements the tea gardens can offer to attract labour, unless we are allowed to spend money. The wage question is the real difficulty, and I quite see that we shall find it hard to compete with other industries, unless we are prepared to raise wages.

No. 155.—Mr. A. F. Rich, *Jagcherra Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 21 years in tea, all in this Valley. I have 906 acres under tea, with a working force of about one person per acre. I could do with more labour, as I should be able to grant leave more readily. I have 20 people under Act VI. I wish to see the Act abolished. I have hitherto recruited through sardars, but they have been most unsuccessful of late. This year, for the first time, I took 70 contractors' coolies from Raniganj. They are not satisfactory. Seven have gone clean away. Others also bolted, but I got them back at stations along the line. My sardars usually went to Hazaribagh and Ghazipur; I sent none out this year. With the abolition of the Act, I hope my sardars will do better in future. If they do not, I should still have to buy from contractors. I should have no objection in that case to the present control being kept over contractors.

I pay my coolies 15 pice for men and 3 annas for women from the start. In the plucking season the women can earn up to R7 and R8 a month. I think that we must pay great attention to the labour force we have got, and take special care of the rising generation, and thus get clear of our labour troubles. I have only 15 acres of rice land attached to my garden. The coolie is very keen on getting a rice *khet*. I get 40 good working people from the bastis in the hoeing and plucking seasons.

No. 156.—Mr. A. Cooper, *Mazdehee Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 4 years in Sylhet, and before that over 30 years in Cachar. I have now over 800 coolies on 680 acres of tea. I have Santals, Bengalis and North-Westers. The North-Westers do all right. There has always, in my experience, been a certain amount of difficulty about labour, but the difficulty has become acute within the last five years. I attribute it partly to the new Act, but there is, of course, increased competition for labour throughout India. I have been trying to recruit through sardars in the Central Provinces, but they have been very unsuccessful, getting about one coolie a head on an average. I only sent three down this year, but they recruited no one; these men went to Chota Nagpur. I pay 3-anna haziris, and the men get 15 pice in the height of the season; the women get 3 annas also. The women do not earn much at ticca pice. The coolie does not want to work. I have a little rice land and many of my coolies cultivate under the neighbouring zemindar. I have 4 Act VI coolies who came up under agreement; about half my adult coolies are under Act XIII agreements. My coolies turn out about 5 days in the week on the average. I do not want contractors' coolies, if I can pull along without them. I think sardari recruiting will be more successful without the Act.

There is no doubt that on some gardens the women go in for abortion. Some of the women do not marry. They make more money as single women than married, and do not wish to be bothered with children.

Fifteen or twenty years ago the sardar, especially the North-Wester, used to go down by himself and bring up recruits; now I send the sardars to a local agent. After the Act goes, I should probably still employ some agent to assist the sardar. I can get in basti coolies from time to time when I want them; I pay them the same haziri as my garden coolies. My birth-rate is over double the death-rate, but my force tends to diminish, as coolies drift away, especially to gardens that have rice land to give out, or to take up cultivation. If I had rice land, they would stay with me. I am satisfied with Act XIII, if the bonus is treated as an advance under the Act.

LANGLA, 28TH APRIL 1906.

Sylhet.

No. 157.—MR. H. A. C. COLQUHOUN, I.C.S., *Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet.*

I have been Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet for about a year, and have served in tea districts in the Assam Valley for four years. In this district I do not consider that Act VI is necessary; it is very little used. I have always been of opinion that, though the Act coolies receive a living wage, the remuneration offered is insufficient for service under a penal contract. Land is no doubt a great attraction to coolies. My impression is that coolies are allowed greater facilities for cultivation here than in the Assam Valley. In the Surma Valley there are far fewer cases in court in connection with the working of the Labour Acts than in the Assam Valley, from which I infer that in the Surma Valley the relations between managers and their coolies are more harmonious than in the Assam Valley. The chaukidaring of coolies in Assam is effective in the case of those gardens where there are topographical facilities. I think that the coolie in Assam knows that he is free to leave the garden when his contract is expired, though there must be cases where pressure, not necessarily illegitimate, is used to get him to renew. I think that the tendency in the Assam Valley, at least three years ago, was to assimilate the practice as regards chaukidaring in respect of Act XIII coolies to that in respect of Act VI coolies. It is commonly supposed that abortion is prevalent on tea-gardens in the Assam Valley and I have never heard of any special steps being taken to prevent it.

No. 158.—MR. R. WOOD, *Langla Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have spent 22 years in tea mostly in Sylhet. I have 1,600 acres under tea and a labour force of 2,400 out of a population on the garden of 3,300. I have had to do no recruiting for the last few years. I am strongly in favour of the abolition of Act VI. I have never had any Act coolies; there is no necessity here for having labour under the Act. My force is a mixed one of North-Westers, Madras and Bengal coolies. Should I have to recruit after Act VI is abolished I should use sardars. I would like to see contractors done away with altogether. I have had during the last three years 61, 84 and 62 new arrivals on my garden. Some of these have come in locally, some are old coolies returned from down country and some are people who have come as ordinary passengers with returning coolies.

All my working force is under Act XIII. The agreements are generally entered into at the labourer's request. I think that an agreement is useful to us as it has a good moral effect. A coolie who has taken a bonus considers that he is bound to stay and work it off. Without some such hold over the coolie, we should have difficulties with our labour; the coolie is getting more independent every year. It is not that we want to have a hold over the coolie in order to get the maximum of work out of him; what we want is to get a fair day's work without any scamping. I pay a 3-anna haziri for from 12 *nals* in the dry season to 30 *nals* in the wet. At no time does a man work over 4 hours a day. It was formerly customary to get 6 hours work a day, but we have now to humour the coolie more than formerly. At certain times of the year the men can make up to 6 annas, but they will not exert themselves to earn this if their women are making a high wage, sometimes up to a rupee a day, in the plucking season.

I have 500 acres of *dhan* land. It is a great attraction to a garden to give the coolies some land for cultivation. I never want labour from the bastis.

I pay attention to the birth-rates on my garden; I consider it a very important point. There were 131 births last year out of which only 9 children died. I pay a bonus of R2 for every child. During the last year or two the women have taken to feeding their children on the feeding bottle, and I have given out some 200 bottles for the purpose. The reason is that the woman can go out to work leaving her child with the old people, and suckling it at night. Women are given four months' leave at child-birth, and they can take more.

I encourage the grant of leave during the cold weather to coolies who want to revisit their country. I should like to see it made more easy for coolies to get to their country and come back again. They always require some leave certificate to save them from being interfered with by the railway police. It would do much good if the coolie could be freed from all this *dik* when travelling by rail. I get constant complaints from the steadiest coolies of the trouble they have had in getting to their homes and back to the garden.

I have already said that I want Act XIII only for its moral effect; I never prosecute under it myself. If I did, it would only be to have some hold over the other coolies. I should like, however, to see the bonus legalized, and I should like the Act to be interpreted in the same way by different magistrates. The bonus I give is R8 for a year's agreement. We expect 300 days work in a year. I think the Act can do without a section providing against enticement of coolies. It would be derogatory to the planter, and we had better settle the matter among ourselves.

The coolies who come up themselves are nearly all from the North-West or Madras. The *jungli* does not come up like this. The Madras coolie has been here for over 20 years, and the acclimatized Madrasi is about the best worker we have got. The Madrasis are very prolific and have given me a very good force. They live well and work well. Children work to please themselves and begin to do so as soon as they like.

I would not favour a Central Agency for recruitment. I do not think it would be to the advantage of this Valley.

Sylhet.

No. 159.—Mr. F. Sutterby, *Manager, Hingajia Division, Chargola Tea Association, Sylhet.*

I came to Sylhet in 1883. I have 941 acres of tea with a working labour force of 1,121, mainly North-Westers with a few Hazaribagh men. I last recruited in 1899 when I went to the Central Provinces and got contractors' coolies. As the birth-rate is very high and the death-rate very low, the force has since then maintained itself. I have no Act VI coolies and am quite willing that the Act should go. Except the children, my whole working force is under Act XIII agreements. I give R12 advance to men and R10 to women for a year's agreement. Wages are R5 for men and R4 for women ; that is, men get 3 annas a day and women 9 pice. If an agreement coolie comes up and asks to go, on refunding the balance of his advance, I allow him to go if he insists. The plucking *nirikh* is 12 pice for 20 pounds of leaf, but in the cold weather work women earn 9 pice. I have about 350 acres of *dhan* land. I give no bonus on births. A woman is supposed to take leave for a month before and 3 months after child-birth. The leave after birth is more in the interests of the child than the mother ; a child cannot live out of doors all day.

I am satisfied with Act XIII. I never prosecute under it. I should like to see the enticement of coolies penalized. I think that the contractor should be done away with. I used to recruit through sardars up to 1897 in the North-Western Provinces, but after that too many obstacles were put in their way. I refer to the plague inspection, etc. ; the station people also have become more and more enterprising. If I sent sardars again I would not send them to any agent; the sardar would go to his country and bring up his friends. After the new arrival had been about 6 months on the garden I would give him an Act XIII agreement. I give a good deal of leave in the cold weather but I should not care to facilitate this by the grant of cheap tickets. Some 12 or 15 men go during the season for about a month at a time. There are many North-Westers in the bastis here and they go freely to their country and bring up their friends.

No. 160.—Mr. W. R. Walker, *Sonarupa Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been in tea since 1877, all the time in the Sylhet district. The acreage of my garden is 530 and I have a labour force of about 1,000 souls. I estimate that 1½ adults per acre are required to work my garden. I need about another 100 coolies. I have not recruited for the last four years as I have been waiting for some simplification of the labour laws. In future I shall recruit through sardars. I think that contractors should be kept under control in the recruiting districts. I should like to see the contractor abolished if we could do without him, but I doubt if we could do so at present. I would send my sardars to a local agent, as I do not think they can be trusted to work without supervision.

I have no coolies under Act VI. I approve of the withdrawal of that Act as I do not think it is suitable for Sylhet. My working coolies are given contracts under Act XIII. I give a bonus of R12 to men and R10 to women for a one year's agreement. I have never prosecuted any coolies under Act XIII. I should like to see greater uniformity in the administration of Act XIII by magistrates.

I pay my coolies at the rate of R5 for men and R4 for women. My coolies work about five days a week. It does not pay me to force them to work when they do not want to. Pregnant women always get three months' leave and more if they want it. The birth-rate is good. I pay no bonus on births, but though a well-to-do woman in this condition does not receive pay for the time she is on leave, the period of pregnant leave up to three months is not added to the term of the contract. A poor woman would be given support if required.

A man can complete an average task in four hours.

I should like to see a Central Recruiting Agency established under the control of the Tea Association.

I have never employed the daily ticket payment system, and I do not think my coolies would like it. I used to pay ticca pice daily in cash, but at the request of my people I stopped doing so and paid it to them with the rest of their pay at the end of the month. The coolies told me that if they were paid daily they were more apt to fritter their money away than if they received their earnings in a lump sum at the end of the month.

I have given out about 50 acres of *dhan* land to my coolies. It helps to settle the people to let them have a little land.

I am of opinion that coolies should be encouraged to visit their homes in the cold weather, in order that they may keep in touch with their relations in their country.

I build lines for my coolies. Each family does not necessarily have a separate house. There may be two or three quarters in each block.

I always supply my coolies with rice at the rate of 10 seers to the rupee, whenever the price of rice rises above this rate ; it is to my interest to see that my labourers get sufficient at a reasonable rate.

I can get 200 or 300 basti coolies except when they are engaged on their own cultivation.

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No. 161.—Mr. D. Ferguson, *Dhamai Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 32 years in tea in Cachar and Sylhet. I have 1,100 acres worked by a labour force of a coolie per acre. That is sufficient. There are a great number of outsiders whom I can get when necessary. But the local labour is not very satisfactory; it is mostly Bengali. I have done practically no recruiting in recent years; although I have sent down sardars, they met with no success. This year, however, I have got about 40 people from Orissa and Purulia. I shall in future recruit through sardars only. Contractors have been the bane of my existence for many years by taking coolies from my sardars. Only this year I got 7 coolies who railed down from Assam after serving 3 years on a garden there. These were all men who had originally gone to the depot and asked to be sent to Dhamai, where they had their relations. Instead they were sent up to Assam. I have had many other experiences of coolies recruited for me being snapped up in this way. I hope contractors will be abolished absolutely. I strongly approve of giving coolies leave to visit their homes in the cold weather, but so long as the contractor exists, we stand the chance of losing them altogether. Coolies of mine who have gone down to make arrangements about marriages have been spirited away by arkatis repeatedly.

I always use Act XIII. I am afraid it is not very satisfactory, but I never have had occasion to enforce it, and it serves the purpose of keeping my force together. I think there should be a clause in the Act, if it is amended, against enticement of coolies. I consider it is necessary, although I know that many people do not agree with me in this. I pay R6 a month to men and women, but a woman generally earns a three-quarter haziri, except at leaf plucking when she can earn up to R12 or R14 a month. I give an advance of R5 or R6 for a one year's agreement. I always keep it as an advance and write it off at the end of the year.

Three months' leave is given to a woman on the birth of a child. To a new coolie three months' pay is given; to an old established well-to-do coolie no payment is made. This has long been the rule in gardens in Cachar and in my part of Sylhet. The woman generally takes 3 months on full pay before the birth and 3 months without pay afterwards. The period of absence is counted as part of the agreement term.

I take an agreement for 313 days, but I do not stick to this, so long as the coolie is a fairly steady worker. Cold weather leave also counts in the term.

I have a great amount of rice land, which is highly appreciated by my labourers.

I particularly want to see some system of return tickets for my people going back to their homes. I consider this is of vital importance; much of the difficulty about my coolies going down on leave is due to the want of some system of return passes.

As to the wage I should like to see inducements to emigration offered in some other form than in the shape of a rise in wages. As it is at present, the ordinary man does not care to work so long as his family earnings are enough for the support of the whole family in comfort. Give an increased wage and he will be still less inclined to work. The wage we offer is I think very liberal for doing 4 hours' work a day, which is the usual rule.

KARIMGANJ, 30th April 1906.

No. 162.—Mr. H. A. Brown-Constable, *Managing Proprietor, Adamtila Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 31 years in tea in Cachar and Sylhet. The area of my garden is 478 acres, and my labour force consists of 1,028 souls, North-Westers, Central Provinces and Chota Nagpur people, and Telugus, the majority being *junglis* from Chota Nagpur and Midnapur. The North-Westers do well, but generally return to their country, while other coolies stay. North-Westers work more regularly than the other coolies. As far as my own garden is concerned I have not been recruiting since 1900, but I am Superintendent of a new garden, Isabhil, which is being opened out. I have had up a few challans of depot coolies, and I sent down some time-expired Deswali and Central Provinces coolies this year to act as sardars. They brought back an average of about two coolies per head. For my own garden I should buy more coolies, if I could get them at a more reasonable price, and should send down sardars to recruit if it were not for the obstruction they experience in the recruiting districts. Formerly I used to send down people to Madras, even before the railway was made, and to the United Provinces and Chota Nagpur, and they used to land their coolies at R25 per head, including a bonus of R5 to the sardar. Now they get a lot of trouble from railway servants and the police, and it became so bad that by 1899 I had to stop sending down sardars altogether. Even before that we used to allow about 4 annas a head as *bakshish* for the station-master. I have only got 175 coolies as yet for Isabhil, and I have to use Bengali labour, so I shall require a good many more coolies.

I pay Bengalis 6 annas a day for daily labour, because the garden is in a jungly place. At Adamtila I would pay only 4 annas for Bengali labour. I never give any written contracts. I pay 3-anna haziris for men and women, and a bonus of R12 for men and R10 for women on their agreeing to work for 313 days. Before giving the bonus I make it a condition that the coolie should purchase a cow, so that I may have some security. I have

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never prosecuted a coolie in my life for breach of contract. I have no difficulty in keeping my coolies. At Adamtila I have not much rice land, but the coolies have got some in the village. At Isabhil I have about 600 acres of rice land, and I have told my brother, who is recruiting for me, to offer intending emigrants plots of land. I think that the grant of land has a good effect in keeping coolies. I am quite satisfied with the forms of Act XIII agreements proposed by the Local Government. I should like to see contractors swept away altogether, but if they are retained, I should have no objection to control being kept over them in the recruiting districts.

I should like to see special railway carriages for coolies with latrines and travelling shops. Through tickets should be issued, and the cost of cooked food at rest-houses at fixed points should be included in the price of the through tickets. North-Westers do not, however, like cooked food. I consider that coolies now-a-days are sufficiently smart to be able to go to their country and bring back their friends without the assistance of any agency. I should like to see the tin-ticket system of Ceylon adopted for Assam.

I do not think that Government land should be given to garden coolies who have not been for some years on a tea garden in Assam. At present patwaris are coming to the bazaars and offering coolies land for ₹10-8 a *hal*, which the patwari keeps.

I think that the daily ticket payment system is a good one, though I have not adopted it myself, as my people are quite settled. We have got such a mixture of coolies of different races that it would hardly be possible to adopt the Duars system of paying the coolies through sardars. I consider, however, that a system of paying sardars commission on the work done by their recruits might assist recruiting. My sardars draw pay during the time they are recruiting, and I make North-Wester sardars responsible for any advances received in excess of the cost of the coolies recruited by them. There is a general agreement with the sardar that North-Westers should be delivered on the garden for ₹25.

I give pregnant women as much leave as they want, but such leave does not count in the contract period. I have a high birth-rate. I do not think that abortions are frequently procured. I attribute low birth-rates to hard work and insufficient food, as North-Westers especially prefer saving their money to spending it.

I do not like to stop recruiting as by doing so I might lose my connection with the recruiting districts, and as years go on coolies want more and more leave and our ideal is to turn no coolie out to work who does not want to go, and this requires a very full labour force. A coolie likes to get leave when he wants it. When rice is scarce I import it and sell it to my labourers at cost price.

No. 163.—Mr. C. W. A. Trevor, *Chargola Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have heard the evidence given by Mr. Brown-Constable, and I generally agree in the opinions which he has expressed. My labour force is almost entirely North-West. With the abolition of the Act I hope to be able to recruit successfully through sardars, as there will be no interference with the men I send down. Up to 1898 I used to have no difficulty in recruiting through sardars in Ghazipur and Ballia; they went down and brought up their own relations and acquaintances as third-class passengers. These people were most satisfactory labourers. I now hope that the same thing will again take place if proper arrangements are made for their travelling by rail free of interference.

One matter I wish to bring to notice is that honorary magistrates should be appointed who could issue warrants under Act XIII for the arrest of absconding labourers. I am 34 miles from the nearest magistrate and even if I know where an absconder is, it is impossible to get a warrant in time to be of any use. I do not ask for the trial of cases by such honorary magistrates; all that is wanted is to secure the absconder.

I have myself twice visited the recruiting districts and hold very strong opinions upon the injury to emigration which has been done by the contractor and the arkati. I think the arkati's method of catching coolies is very little removed from slavery. I would strongly urge that the contractor system be entirely abolished.

No. 164.—Mr. C. Pemberton, *East India and Ceylon Tea Company, Dullabcherra, Sylhet.*

I endorse the views expressed by Messrs. Brown-Constable and Trevor. My labour force is mostly North-West with a fair number of Central Provinces people. I have recruited this year from Bilaspur. Half-a-dozen sardars brought up about 30 persons, nearly all Chamars. The Bilaspuri Chamar is not a satisfactory labourer, but we have to take him when we can get no one else. I hope that sardari recruiting will do better when the Act is abolished. I look forward to being able to get people up from the North-West as I used to do, merely letting a man go down to bring up his relations as ordinary third-class passengers. It is very desirable that everything possible should be done to facilitate his travelling by rail. There should be a system of cheap return tickets, and through carriages to Goalundo should be provided. I do not think that any halting stations are wanted at any rate for the North-Wester. He much prefers to make his own arrangements.

SILCHAR, 1st MAY 1906. Sylhet.

No. 165.—Mr. W. T. Cathcart, *Amrail Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 26 years in Cachar and Sylhet. I should like to see contractors' recruiting stopped in the United Provinces and only uncontrolled sardari recruiting allowed there. I believe that the Surma Valley could get a sufficient supply of labour in this way. Except a few right under the hills I believe all the Surma Valley gardens could employ North-West labour. It is not advisable to put a North-Wester under a two or three year agreement; short agreement men would I believe go to and fro between the gardens and their country. Until Act VI came into force you could always get North-West labour though it was becoming increasingly difficult. Now-a-days I have to put new sardari coolies on a three years' agreement because they cost so much, but if they were cheaper, I should have a shorter agreement. A short agreement is best for every one.

I would have sardari recruiting absolutely free. I would not have contractors under any form of control, as this would be an excuse for interference with sardars. With the increased supply of labour, abuses would cease, as labour would become cheap, and it is the cost of labour which renders malpractices profitable. A licensed contractor working for Assam should not be allowed to recruit for the Surma Valley. My idea of sardari recruiting is that the sardar should go down by himself and not be accredited to any local agent. Section 90 has not been much used up to the present, because recruiting has been so unsuccessful that it has not been worth while for the right stamp of man, the man of property and position, to go down as a sardar. Such a man is afraid of getting into trouble with all the legal restrictions and regulations.

I do not think that a system of free recruiting will ever be successful unless 20 or 25 per cent. of the labour force is constantly moving to and fro between the garden and the recruiting districts.

As regards the amendment of Act XIII I consider that the form of the Labour Act is less important than the removal of all restrictions on recruiting, but I think that a labour law on the lines of the Ceylon Ordinance with necessary modifications would be preferable to Act XIII. I think that a provision against enticement would be advisable. I think that a sentence of imprisonment should cancel the labourer's contract.

I am not in favour of a Central Recruiting Agency.

No. 166.—Mr. J. Henderson, *Hattikhira Tea Estate, Sylhet.*

I have been 17 years in tea all of which I have spent in the Sylhet district. The area of my garden is 3,000 acres with a coolie population of 2,700. I require another 1,000 coolies. I have been recruiting lately through both sardars and contractors. I send my sardars to the Central Provinces and United Provinces, but their recruits hardly average one coolie per head. I attribute these poor results to the trouble people have in getting here, and to the fact that they are too well off at home to wish to emigrate. The coolies whom I obtain from contractors are a very poor lot. I get them from Raipur, Jubbulpore and Buxar, and also East Coast coolies through Calcutta. The men and women come up nominally married, but they are not really so and often either bolt or change their partners. Contractors' coolies cost me from R65 to R68. I do not like contractors' coolies, but I cannot very well do without them. I should prefer that contractors be kept under control in the recruiting districts. On one occasion an Act VI coolie imported through a contractor absconded from my garden and within three months was sent up to me again by another contractor.

I pay my men 3¾ annas and my women 3 annas. Most of my coolies are under Act XIII. 225 of them are under Act VI. I pay a bonus of R12 to men and R10 to women on re-engagement. My coolies turn out to work well. I have no muster except in the case of Act VI coolies. I think that Act XIII should be amended, and that a conviction under it should not operate as a release. I would advocate the inclusion of provisions similar to those of clauses 20 and 23 of the Ceylon Ordinance No. 11 of 1865.

I have given out about 150 acres of rice land to my coolies and would give out more if I had it. I think, however, that Government should not settle a tea garden coolie on *khas* land unless he has served 7 years on a garden. At present I have been told that our local patwari visits the bazaars and offers coolies land suitable for sugarcane up to 4 *hals* on the payment to him of R10-8.

My birth-rate is good. I give no bonus on births, but I allow the women leave before and after confinement. They can always get six months' leave if they want.

No. 167.—Mr. R. H. Henderson, C.I.E., *Superintendent, Tarapur Tea Company, Cachar.* Cachar.

I have been 30 years in tea, 5 years in Assam and 25 years in Cachar and Sylhet. The area under tea of the gardens which I superintend is roughly 6,000 acres, and I have a

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labour force of about 6,000 souls. My labour force is almost sufficient for my requirements, but I should like to have some more coolies, as I would then be in a position to grant more leave during the busy months of the year. The gardens would be much more popular if I could get more labour. I have no difficulty in getting my coolies to turn out to work. I have 250 coolies under Act VI. The others are under Act XIII. My Act VI coolies were imported from contractors during the past two years. I have given up sardari recruiting for the last three or four years, as my sardars failed to get coolies. I should say that Act VI has had a very unfavourable effect on sardari recruiting. The following statement shows the number of coolies recruited by my sardars since 1895 : –

Years.	Central Provinces.			Chota Nagpur.		
	No. of sardars.	No. of persons recruited.	Average per sardar.	No. of sardars.	No. of persons recruited.	Average per sardar.
1895	4	71	*17·75*	4	22	*5·50*
1896	85	1,114	*13·10*	81	208	*2·57*
1897	101	1,159	*11·47*	...	...	...
1898	79	645	*8·16*	19	103	*5·42*
1899	...	Recruiting	stopped.	...	...	...
1900	130	1,118	*8·6*	1	...	...
1901	23	165	*7·17*	...	...	...
1902	30	63	*2·1*	17	73	*4·3*
1903	27	47	*1·74*	14	20	*1·43*
1904	...	...	...	...	...	...
1905	59	48	*·82*	9	1	*·11*

In 1904-05, when I was at home, my acting manager sent down about 30 sardars to the Central Provinces with practically no results at all. The coolies whom I am getting from contractors are very carefully selected, but many of the single men desert. The people I am getting are from Cuttack. Those of them who remain contain a sprinkling of good settling coolies. I consider that the contractors' system has had a very bad effect on recruiting as arkatis interfere with our sardars. I would, however, still keep the contractor, because so long as he is employed for the Assam Valley he will interfere with us. I should be prepared to see contractors abolished, if they are abolished for the Assam Valley also. The contractors should be kept under strict control. I should not have any objection to reporting to the Deputy Commissioner here the names of the sardars I am sending down, and when they return sending in a list of the names of the persons they recruit. I wish to make the experiment of sending down my sardars and letting them bring back their recruits like ordinary third class passengers. I wish that every facility should be given to coolies coming up without interference. The issue of third class return tickets to sardars would be beneficial. I would also recommend the grant of special cheap fares to coolies going to and returning from the labour districts.

I am better satisfied with Act XIII since the Local Government has issued instructions as to its working. The principal objection to the Act is that a conviction operates as a release. I do not think a provision penalising enticement is required. There is very little enticement or harbouring of coolies in this district.

I have given out about 1,500 acres of rice land, including that let to Manipuris and others. I consider that it is a good thing to give coolies some rice land, though it has the effect of keeping them off work for some months. The grant of land for cultivation attracts people.

On some of my gardens I pay 4-anna haziris for men and 3-anna for women, and on others 14 pice. The rate varies according to the popularity of the garden. I pay a bonus of ₹12 to men and ₹10 to women on renewal of agreements. My hoeing task is 30 *nals*. A good new coolie can do full work in two months.

My sardari coolies have hitherto come up under a three years' agreement under Section 492, Indian Penal Code, so they would not receive a bonus till they have been three years on the garden. The recruiting advances made to the sardar are not recovered from him. He receives no pay for the time he is recruiting, but is given a commission of ₹7, ₹8 or ₹10 per recruit brought by him.

My coolies have not asked for leave to visit their homes. Very few of them have any desire to return. If a coolie wants to go home he asks to go as a recruiter in order that he may get his expenses paid.

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The labour force in the district is short but not very short. I get in a certain amount of basti labour, but that is included in the 6,000 which I have mentioned as the strength of my labour force.

I do not think that free emigration to this Valley will have a fair chance so long as the Act is retained in the Assam Valley, for all its machinery will be in force in the recruiting districts, and the prejudice which attaches to Assam will still extend to this Valley, as people outside the Province do not distinguish between the two places.

No. 168.—Mr. E. Muspratt, *Manager, Tilkah Tea Company, Lakhipur, Cachar.*

I have heard the statement made by Mr. Henderson, and I generally concur in the views which he has expressed. I should like to add that I find that the well-to-do North-Wester coolie is anxious to pay an occasional visit to his country either at his own expense or as a recruiter. I have a good many North-Westers on my garden, but they have been given so much trouble in the recruiting districts of late years that they do not care to go down. They used to return with a few friends as free emigrants, but owing to the obstructions of police and railway subordinates this has completely stopped. I think that return passes, not tickets, should be issued to coolies at special cheap rates.

Coolie women do not like to have a number of children at short intervals, as it interferes with their working if they have two or three young children to look after; they often suckle their children up to the age of three for the purpose of preventing conception.

No. 169.—Mr. J. Elwin, *Manager, Kuttal Tea Estate, Cachar.*

I agree with what Mr. Henderson has said, and I only wish to add that I think that a very strict investigation should be made in the case of coolies' complaints of interference on the railway journey to or from Assam by police and railway officials. I am sure that there is a great deal of interference now and that it does much to check free emigration.

My labour force is short. I have 800 working coolies on 1,050 acres under tea. I sent down sardars to recruit last year but without any result. I have got a few contractors' coolies this year. They seem to be settling down but they are mostly single people.

No. 170.—Mr. J. Lees, *Superintendent, Cachar and Sylhet Division, Imperial Tea Company, and Proprietor, Kunchanpur Tea Estate, Hailakandi, Cachar.*

At Kunchanpur we have 345 acres under tea and a labour force of 620 coolies, of whom an average of over 400 turn out daily. I am therefore not short of labour, but would be content to take more coolies so as to allow those that I have got an easier time. Gardens in Hailakandi are generally fairly well off for labour. It is one of the healthiest parts of the district, and rice is plentiful and cheap. We have over 200 acres of rice land let out to coolies, and this settles our force. I have not had occasion to do any recruiting lately. The people come to me from the bastis. The birth-rate on my garden is very good, and this I attribute to the fact that the coolies are in good health and not over-worked. I pay no special bonus on births, but I allow women as much leave as they want three or four months before and after child-birth. Coolies dislike being mustered, and in most Hailakandi gardens the morning muster is being discontinued. The bell is rung and the coolies turn out at their own time. I consider that they work quite as well as they did when they were mustered and sent to work at a regular hour. I am not in favour of the contractors' system.

No. 171.—Mr. A. F. G. Cresswell, *Rampur Tea Estate, Cachar.*

I have 1,600 acres under tea situated on four gardens. On one of these I have an average of 1¾ coolies per acre, on a second one coolie, on a third just over half a coolie, and on the fourth one coolie. On the low-staffed gardens the outturn is very small, and they can get on with a small labour force. My recruiting is not concerned with North-West labour; North-Westers cannot live on some of the gardens. I get my coolies from the semi-jungly districts, such as Gaya, Bankura, etc., and some of the Central Provinces districts. I also have a fair number of Christian coolies from Orissa. From 1896 to 1900 my sardars brought up from 4 to 7 coolies per head. From 1901 there was a rapid fall, down to one coolie per sardar, and latterly to half. Since the cold weather of 1902, I have practically been unable to recruit any. I attribute this to competition in the recruiting districts, and also to the great difficulty which sardars have in getting their friends to come in, and go through the necessary formalities. I have always recruited through a local agent. My sardars have been afraid to go down under Section 92 in districts not notified under Section 3, because they would have to go without a certificate, and they consider that the latter gives them some protection.

I am of opinion that the Act should be entirely done away with. When it is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, I consider that coolies will gradually be unwilling to face the

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Act in Assam, and that the latter Valley will eventually take to free labour. I would abolish all contractors, and leave the field free to sardari recruiting. If contractors are retained for the Assam Valley, I think it will lead to trouble in the way of contractors purchasing coolies from free sardars and sending them to Assam.

I consider that for some years to come some kind of Act on the lines of Act XIII will be necessary, with clauses embodied to correspond with clauses 20 and 23 of the Ceylon Ordinance.

I would have railway fares greatly cheapened for emigrants with a zone system of fares, a scheme of credit notes being introduced. The railway would deliver the emigrants here, and payment would be made at this end.

I would recommend that Government should consider, in opening new land to cultivation, the case of the tea gardens which have had to import their labour. I think that nothing should be done to attract this labour to such new settlements, at least until it has been for some few years on the garden.

A great many of my labourers are not under any agreement. The coolies who are not under agreement get the same pay as those who are. I put no woman under an agreement except on one garden. I believe that this leads to an increase in the birth-rate. A woman should be as free as possible before and after confinement.

I pay men ₹6, women ₹5 and children ₹4, calculated as under Act VI, that is dividing the amount by the working days in the month. I also give extra work at a slightly higher rate. When provisions are dear, I increase the ticca work. I give leave freely to people who want it. I give a ₹10 bonus to a man who agrees to do a full task of 25 *nals*; some men prefer to have a light task, and accept a bonus of ₹8; on one garden the bonus is ₹12 to men and ₹10 to women. I do not put coolies arriving from their country under an agreement until after a year. After that I take an agreement for one year giving a bonus of ₹10 to ₹12. I supply rice to all new coolies at ₹3 per maund and do not require them to do full work for the first year.

I know that the people whose interests I represent are prejudiced against the idea of a Central Agency, as they think it would not favour a flow of labour under the free system which is now to be introduced.

No. 172.—Mr. H. Grant, *Manager, Ainakhal Tea Estate, Cachar.*

I have been 23 years in tea, of which I spent 16 in the Duars and the remainder of the time in Cachar and Sylhet. The area of my present gardens is 1,400 acres, and I have a labour force of 2,500 persons. My labour force is quite sufficient for my requirements, but simply in order to keep my coolies in touch with their country, I sent some sardars about six months ago to recruit in the United Provinces, Central Provinces and Bengal. Those sent to the Santal Pergannas and Purulia worked under Section 90. The sardars returned with about one coolie per head. I have only 11 Act VI coolies on the garden: they were imported through contractors. I would like to see contractors abolished, and if they are retained I consider that they should be controlled.

Personally, I am for the abolition of all Acts, but if Act XIII is retained I should like to see the bonus legalised, as magistrates are apt to hold different views as to what constitutes an advance. I do not think that a clause penalising enticement or harbouring of coolies is required.

I pay both men and women 3-anna haziris, and hoeing tasks vary from 20 to 30 *nals* according to the nature of the soil. Hardly half the labour force is under contract under Act XIII. I give a bonus of ₹6 to men and ₹4 to women for renewal of agreements. I do not find that the people who are not under contract do less work than those who have given agreements. My coolies turn out to their work very well. I have no muster.

I consider that the condition as regards health and cheapness of food are much more favourable to the coolies in Cachar than in the Duars. I think that the Duars system of sardari recruitment could easily be introduced here. The sardars would need to be men of substance and I have such on my garden. I am of opinion that the system would be beneficial in recruiting labour, as the coolie has a great belief in his own headman. I am sure the coolies would agree to the system though some might raise objections at first.

Service in Assam is unpopular with Duars coolies. When in the Duars I tried to get some to go across the river into the Goalpara district, but they would not do so. They call Assam the *agreement ka jaga*.

To popularise emigration to Assam, labour should be free in the labour districts and there should be no restrictions of any sort in the recruiting districts.

I am not in favour of a Central Recruiting Agency.

I have given out about 500 or 600 acres of rice land to my coolies to cultivate. My coolies have some 1,500 head of cattle.

Copy of letter received from witness dated 3rd May 1906.

If further evidence on my part is admissible, I would respectfully submit the following note on the sardari labour question as carried out on this estate, and which is practically the Duars system.

Manniram Das, native of Sylhet, has collected and settled 200 coolies on estate, gets commission at the rate of one anna per rupee worth of work performed by his coolies. The task is the same as done by the non-sardari coolies. We keep this man's accounts and pay his coolies, as it became too much for him when the coolies exceeded 100. The arrangement was come to by mutual consent of all parties interested.

Ismail, Mussulman, born on estate, worked as a coolie, saved money, bought land adjoining, has command of 50 coolies. He receives all pay and commission and accounts with the coolies himself.

Ramshai, Kurmi, a native of Azamgarh, an old coolie of estate, worked here for over 30 years, has command of over 50 coolies and works on the same principle as Ismail.

You will observe that our system is a slight improvement on the Duars from the employer's point of view for the following reason, *viz.*, whereas the Duars sardar receives his one pice commission for every coolie at work, ours is only paid one pice per every four annas worth of work performed and passed, which means a good deal in a year's working.

In my opinion there should be no difficulty in gradually introducing this system, which would without doubt popularize Cachar and Sylhet in the recruiting districts.

No. 173.—Mr. H. Weir, *Kalline Tea Estate, Cachar.*

I have 1,650 acres of tea with a labour force of 1,884, all Chota Nagpuris except 200 from Sambalpur. I have not done much recruiting lately because I cannot get Chota Nagpuris and the contractors' coolies I got have been unsatisfactory. I think that the difficulty of supply is due to the trouble sardars have in getting through the cordon of police, they are so interfered with in the district. When once in the train they have a fair chance of arriving here. I have known of 20 or 30 coolies being taken from sardars by arkatis; but the industry cannot afford to dispense with the contractor altogether. I would have him very strictly supervised. I could work my garden better with 200 more coolies but I do not wish to take unsatisfactory ones. I can get in a good deal of basti labour, about 200 in the busy season.

All my labourers are under Act XIII. Bonuses given are R12 and R8 in most gardens, but on one jungly garden I give R16 and R10. Men get 4-anna haziris and women 3-anna. I have monthly payments. I do not think the daily ticket system a good one, as it prevents the coolie saving money. I should like to have the coolie compelled to finish his contract instead of as at present being free after a short term of imprisonment. I would have separate recruiting associations for the Surma Valley and the Brahmaputra Valley.

In 1882 I got up North-West coolies at R8 a head; they came up in native boats and were brought up by a sardar from the garden. I got as many as I wanted. This was on a garden close to Silchar where the coolies have a good market for their milk and other produce. I lost a number of coolies when the railway was under construction. It cost me R32,000 to replace them. I give a present of R3 or R4 to a woman who gives birth to a child. I give women three months' leave before and three months after child-birth, but they often refuse to take so much. I think it everything both for the mother and the child that there should be a good long term of leave after child-birth especially in the rains.

3rd May 1906.

(Mr. Milne and Captain Kennedy *present.*)

No. 174.—Dr. H. J. Glover, *Medical Officer, Tarapur Tea Company, Cachar.*

I joined my present appointment in 1895. Previous to that I had no connection with tea-gardens. I have medical charge of about 20 gardens. In the Tarapur Tea Company there is a central hospital, and each of the nine out-gardens is provided with a branch hospital. Coolies treated in the central hospital receive full pay and diet. There has been some objection on the part of coolies to going to hospital, but it is dying out. The chief cause of their objection was the high death-rate due to an outbreak of pneumonia. *Jungli* coolies stand the climate best, but I think that almost any class can be acclimatised with care. I consider that North-Westers would do in some of the Tarapur gardens. There are many of them at Cossipore and Binuakundi, and they do well. North-Westers seem to like houses with mud walls.

The health of the coolies is steadily improving. Last year I had an improvement of 52 per cent. in the death-rate at the central hospital. The birth-rate varies. In some gardens it is better than in others. I think that in gardens with a large labour force, where leave consequently can be more freely given, the birth-rate is better. No bonus on births is paid on any of the gardens under me as far as I know. The ordinary leave given to a woman before and after child-birth is three or four months. In special cases more leave is given. I think that four to five months' leave is ordinarily sufficient for women at this time. I do not consider that putting women under agreement makes any difference in the birth-rate. As far as I know, women on pregnant leave do not receive pay. I think it would have a good effect if even half pay were given, but care would have to be taken that the woman got the value of the pay in food. Husbands do not, as a rule, force their wives out to work after child-birth before they are fit. I think generally that reasonable leisure increases the fertility of women. One hears that abortions are frequently induced, but I doubt if this is true, as I have only known of one proved case. Miscarriages from natural causes are common. One of the chief causes of miscarriages is syphilis, of which there is a good deal, especially among new coolies.

Cachar.

I consider that the medical examination of emigrants in this respect leaves much to be desired. It is very difficult to completely eradicate syphilis in coolies as they will not submit to the prolonged treatment that is required in order that the person affected may produce healthy offspring. Another cause of sterility is gonorrhœa either in males or females. Coolie depot chaukidars should be systematically examined for venereal disease, if possible, every few days, as I have found chaukidars suffering from this disease along with the batch of coolies which they brought up to the garden, and the inference is that they infect the young women.

The diseases which produce anaemia, *e. g. anchylostomiasis* and *piroplasmosis,* also injuriously affect both conception and birth-rate, and this aspect of the question is so important that I would recommend that Government should appoint a commission of one or two medical men to investigate the method of infection of the latter disease. *Piroplasmosis* is a great bar to a high birth-rate and a good many coolies suffer from it. Very special care should be taken in the prevention of both diseases. I do not think that many coolies arrive in Assam affected with *anchylostomiasis,* while *piroplasmosis* is very rare in new arrivals. The damp climate of Assam is favourable to *anchylostomiasis* atle ast.

Another cause of miscarriage is the fact that the proportion of diseases in this country attended by a high temperature is large, *e.g.,* malarial fever and pneumonia. Diseases of this sort also contribute to the number of miscarriages. Tuberculosis also is often attended with the early death of the mother. This disease is far more common in India than is generally supposed, and appears to be on the increase, due to the fact that a tuberculous coolie expectorates where he pleases and so infection is carried. Another cause of the low birth-rate is that a coolie often calls in medical aid too late, after preventible accidents have happened. Generally, *jungli* coolies breed the best, but acclimatised Central Provinces coolies are fairly fertile. It takes about two years to acclimatise a Central Provinces coolie whereas a *jungli* settles down right away. Depot marriages have a most depressing effect on the birth-rate, as the marriage is often quickly dissolved and the woman may not be able to find a man of her caste on the garden. Indulgence in alcohol seems to have little influence on increasing or diminishing the birth-rate. Indulgence in ganja has similarly no effect on the birth-rate. Polygamy has an adverse effect on the birth-rate. I have found that at Dewan the average number of children of men with more than one wife was 2·1 in a series of cases, which would be below the average.

I think that Government could help a good deal towards increasing the birth-rate by taking steps to stop the importation of coolies with venereal diseases, by preventing depot marriages and by having the mode of infection by *piroplasmosis* investigated. Coolies who own land seem to have larger families, and if Government could help in the way of giving cheap land near the gardens it would be beneficial. Opium is so little used here, that I cannot speak as to its effect on the birth-rate, but that is a question which might be studied in Assam. A modification of the French system of looking after the mother during the later stages of pregnancy and after the child is born, and of bestowing the same attention on the child after its birth would be beneficial. I do not think that prolonged suckling of children has any effect on the birth-rate, and as far as I know the coolies themselves do not think so. That coolies are anxious to have children is evident from the fact that orphans are readily adopted.

As regards the general health of coolies, I consider that the free grant of casual leave is very beneficial. The importation of coolie families with children is very advisable.

Sibsagar.

GOLAGHAT, 7TH MAY 1906.

(MR. ROBERTSON *absent.*)

No. 175.—MR. C. T. FORBES, *Manager, Badulipar Tea Company, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

The gardens in our immediate circle are fairly well off for labour; 1¼ coolies per acre is a sufficient labour force. I do entirely sardari recruiting; this year I have got 140 coolies for about 40 sardars, chiefly Bhuiyas from Gaya and Central Provinces labour. The sardars complain of trouble. Section 90 sardars inform me that they have to appear personally before the magistrate and also to produce their coolies personally. I consign most of my sardars to a local agent, but I sent one man this year on his own. I think if Section 90 is worked properly many sardars could manage by themselves. Most of my sardars do not draw pay while away, and those who do not work honestly are liable to have their advances partially recovered. The sardars also complain that they have great difficulty in evading the district and railway police. They have to pay some *dasturi* if caught by the police.

If the Act is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, I think that it would at first have a great advantage in recruiting without any control, including through free contractors, but that abuses would soon arise and Government would again be compelled to legislate as in 1901. I think that if Act VI were withdrawn from Assam, the coolie would become master of the situation and Government would have to keep a large force to control the unruly population. I cannot foretell whether the coolie would leave the tea-gardens or not. I do not take renewed contracts under Act VI. I prefer the Act XIII contract because it has been the custom of the garden. A new coolie gets a small bonus and is treated as an Act

VI coolie; old coolies get R10 a year for men, R5 for women, boys R8 and children R3; wages are R5 and R4. One garden I know pays R6 and R5. My coolies are now doing two ticcas in addition to their haziri. I do not think it good policy to refuse them ticca work when they want it. Nearly all my coolies have rice land, and this is the usual practice in the district. **Sibsagar.**

In my opinion the Act is of no use without Sections 195 and 196. As a matter of fact I hardly use the sections myself. If an old coolie is determined to bolt it is difficult to stop him. I do not believe that Sections 195 and 196 have a bad effect on recruiting.

If Act VI were done away with, Act XIII would need amendment, it takes too long to get a warrant from a magistrate. It takes two years to acclimatise a new coolie and accustom him to the work. Personally so far as this district is concerned I should be willing to give up Sections 195 and 196 in return for greater facilities in sardari recruiting. I think that it would facilitate matters if the local agents were allowed to act as registering officers. The present delay at the depot is a source of great discontent. I do not see how a Central Recruiting Agency is to work. If one were started, I think it would have to be controlled by a Government officer. I think that the term of initial contract might be shortened to two years; I believe that a coolie who has been two years in the country will usually stay. I see no objection to putting the daily wage for a daily task in the contract. I once got a batch of 50 North West Provinces coolies 16 years ago and I found them very bad workers. I never heard of gardens paying a bonus on births. Women after child-birth are not made to go out to work till the doctors think that they are fit; they generally take at least 3 months' leave. Central Provinces women do not breed well, as many of them are syphilitic. I think that the contractor is a necessary evil; but personally I have not dealt with one for years.

No. 176.—Mr. E. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Manager, Hautley Tea Estate, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

Owing to the difficulty which I experienced in obtaining labour through my sardars I have started a system of importing labour free. My sardars failed because they had recruited all their relations and friends and so had exhausted their connection. I am now bringing Santals up under no contract whatever, on the understanding that if they want to go back they can do so. I am settling them on land. I know that the people whom I have got up under this system would not have come under a four years' contract. I experienced no official opposition in recruiting them, and they were subjected to no obstructions on the way up. I am thinking of working them through their headmen. The only drawback to my scheme, which involves the people going to and fro between their homes and the garden, is the expense of the journey. I should like to see a system of reduced fares and return tickets at both ends introduced. This is essential if, as I hope, the people will eventually come up of their own accord. A system of through booking with the recovery of the fares from the manager after the arrival of the passengers on the garden would be beneficial. I have had no experience of North-West labour in this district, but I do not see why it should not do provided the coolies are properly looked after. I have a labour force of about 1½ coolies, including working children, per acre, and this is sufficient to work my garden. I only want more people in order to be able to grant my coolies more leave. I am sure that the free grant of leave has a good effect in popularising a garden and also on the health of the coolies.

I do not think that the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will affect this district. I am decidedly opposed to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196. I do not think that if these sections were withdrawn many of my coolies would abscond, but I consider that these provisions have a good moral effect in preventing desertions.

I have imported contractors' coolies both from licensed and unlicensed depots. Quite 70 per cent. of these coolies are satisfactory. I should strongly object to the abolition of contractors, but I consider that every contractor should be licensed, and that every coolie from a contractor should come up under an Act contract. I do not approve of the free contractors' system.

If Act VI were withdrawn, I do not think that many of our coolies would abscond, but I am against its withdrawal as we must have a hold on the coolies as security for our money. Personally, I would not pay a high price for free coolies from contractors, because I am not dependent on them, but others who have to depend on them would pay the same price as before.

I see no objection to the term of the contract being reduced to even as low as one year. I myself am aiming at free labour. I consider that it would be a good thing if coolies could be induced to visit their homes more frequently. I do not think that the offer of land to time-expired coolies would have a good result.

Gardens in this district generally pay monthly. One garden has recently started the daily ticket system. I am of opinion that daily payments would not be popular with the coolies, as they prefer to get the pay in a lump sum.

I should be in favour of a Central Recruiting Agency working under the auspices of the

Sibsagar.

Act XIII works well enough on my garden ; the great flaw in it is that a conviction operates as a release. There should also be a clause penalising enticement.

I do not think that the industry could afford an increase of pay, and I doubt very much whether a small increase of pay would attract more labour. The present pay of the coolie is sufficient to keep him in comfort. If, however, the cost of importation were reduced we could perhaps afford something extra. I give bonuses of R12 to men and R10 to women for a year's agreement on pay of R5 and R4. I do not think it would be a good thing to pay the bonus at the end of the term of the contract, as the coolie would not understand it and would be suspicious.

I have a good birth-rate on my garden. I do not take any particular steps to encourage births. Abortions are common among Central Provinces coolies, but they as a rule give it up after four or five years' residence on the garden.

I should like to see the local agent appointed as registering officer for sardari coolies and Section 90 extended to every district.

No. 177.—Mr. J. W. H. McNab, *Manager, Dooria Tea Estate, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

I think that the difficulty of getting labour for Assam is partly due to the competition of other industries, which is likely to go on increasing ; also to a certain extent to the malpractices of arkatis in former years ; and in some districts to the antagonism of the officials, particularly in the lower grades, such as police and chowkidars. There is also the opposition of zemindars and mahajans. Official antagonism might be checked by more sympathy on the part of the higher officers, and this would also have an effect on the mahajan and zemindar. This year I sent down 59 sardars who have so far recruited 104 souls ; these came from Chota Nagpur, Monghyr, the Santal Pergannas and the East Coast. Monghyr Chamars do very well when acclimatised ; it takes about 2 years to acclimatise them. I do not think that the available supply of labour has seriously diminished taking the recruiting districts as a whole. I usually put the Section 90 coolie under a three years' Act XIII contract on arrival.

I think that if the Act is abolished in the Surma Valley it will affect our recruiting prejudicially, especially in the closed districts. The Surma Valley sardar will be free to take away his coolies without any enquiry, while our coolies will still have to face what is practically a trial. The Surma Valley, however, at present recruits principally in areas which are not important to us. I am sure from personal experience that the four-year contract has a bad effect in the recruiting districts, and I think that it would be good policy to reduce it to two years. All railway officials try and bleed sardars returning with coolies ; I think that the proposed voucher system is a very sound one.

I do not think that anything in particular would happen in this district if Act VI were withdrawn. I consider Sections 195 and 196 are of the utmost importance in regard to new coolies. A contractor's coolie settles down and becomes as contented as any other in course of time. If these sections go, the whole Act may as well go. Act XIII might be improved ; imprisonment should not cancel the agreement, and a man should not be allowed to return his advance and cancel his agreement without very sufficient reason.

I can get in no basti labour on my garden. I see no objection to putting a daily wage in the contract. I have given out as much rice land as I have, 50 or 60 acres. My new coolies get rice at R3 a maund for three years if they wish for it ; sardari coolies usually soon give it up. I am in favour of having all contractors licensed. I believe in encouraging coolies to return to their districts and this is especially true in respect to women ; not nearly so many women go back as is desirable.

No. 178.—Mr. J. B. Woosman, *Manager, Borjan Tea Company, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

I have 615 acres under tea and a little over 800 working souls, and I can get any amount of local labour to hoe and a good deal to pluck. The local labour consists of old tea garden coolies who have taken up land. Many of them are the husbands of women on my garden. I have a good deal of rice land of my own. I do some recruiting now so as to keep in touch with the recruiting districts. Last year I recruited about an adult a head and this year 15 sardars have got between 20 and 30 coolies. If we can get our labour up without restrictions as under Section 90 properly interpreted, I do not think that the withdrawal of Act VI from the Surma Valley will do us any harm. I would dispense with the necessity for the Section 90 sardar accompanying the recruit to the labour districts. If Act VI were withdrawn, it would be necessary to have an act like Act XIII, with provisions recognising a bonus as a good consideration and compelling the coolie to work regularly and to complete his contract. The Act XIII agreement should specify completed tasks and not days, and two years should be the maximum term of contract. I would also fix a minimum bonus. I pay R12 and R10 with a wage of R5 and R4. I pay 4 annas for 25 or 30 *nals* to basti labour. I think on the withdrawal of Act VI the coolies would not bolt but would cease to work regularly.

Sections 195 and 196 I consider an essential part of Act VI. These clauses and the clauses preventing the coolie from sitting idle are the only provisions of value to the planter. I do not renew under Act VI because it is more bother than it is worth with old settled coolies; it is chiefly with new contractors' coolies that it is wanted.

I should not object to a reduction of the term of contract to three years. I should not mind coming down to two years for sardari coolies.

I do not consider that contractors can be done away with, but I think that they should all be licensed. I am very doubtful as to how far a Central Recruiting Agency would work. There would be a difficulty when there was a dearth of labour and also when the supply was greater than the demand, as was the case five years ago.

No. 179.—Mr. C. Ingram, *Manager, Rangajan Tea Estate, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

I also superintend the Dooka Tea Estate. I am fairly well off for labour but could do with more. This year my sardars have brought about a coolie a head to Rangajan and 1½ to Dooka; last year they did rather better. It has been more difficult to get sardari labour since Act VI was passed. I principally recruit from Chota Nagpur. I attribute the difficulty largely to the way in which the sardar is handled by the officials and especially the underlings; it is hard that a sardar should have to bring in a number of people to establish the indentity of the coolie he has recruited; the difficulty is especially marked in the case of single women. I am in favour of the extension of Section 90. I would also substitute a report by the manager of the tea-graden for the report which the Section 90 sardar is now supposed to submit three days before leaving the district. Provided there is a system of railway credit notes, there are coolies who are fit to go down and recruit without reference to a local agent.

I think that free recruiting for the Surma Valley will injure our recruiting, if we have still to recruit under the Act. Under these circumstances, I should also be prepared to drop Act VI, if Act XIII were revised. I would have it provide for the completion of the contract in spite of a conviction. The expenses of recruitment should also be treated as an advance under the Act, and if a man leaves before his contract is completed, he should be liable to refund at least one year's bonus. I think it would be a mistake not to allow Act XIII agreements for at least two years. Coolies often come and ask me for R36 for a three-year agreement, when they want to buy cattle or have a marriage.

I put my free sardari coolies under a three-year Act XIII agreement on arrival on the garden. The old coolie is more likely to refuse to work out an agreement than a newly arrived one. I would be prepared to see the term of contract reduced to three years. I do not think that a Central Recruiting Agency would be workable. I should like to see all contractors licensed.

I give my coolies as much rice land as they like, and have taken up land for the purpose. 30 or 40 per cent. of the Rangajan coolies have land. I charge them nominal rents. I should object to Government giving land on favourable terms to coolies, because there is no land available here in the neighbourhood of the gardens, and it would do us no good to have coolies taken into the Nambor Forest.

No. 180.—Mr. T. H. Knolles, *Manager, Jamguri Tea Estate, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

The area of my garden is 417 acres with a labour force of 538 working coolies including children. I also employ Cachari labourers, who are paid 4 annas a haziri with two pice commission to the duffadar. I require more coolies than I have got. I sent down about 20 sardars to the Central Provinces and Chota Nagpur this season, and they recruited 61 souls. I sent some sardars to the Santal Pergannas also, but without success. The coolies are imported under agreement under Act VI. I do not use Section 90, because I like to have immigrants put under contract under Act VI in the recruiting districts. My sardari coolies have been costing me R82 per head, including R12 bonus paid on the garden to the sardar. The sardar's pay while in the recruiting districts is debited against his advances, but any excess of advances over pay is written off and not recovered. If I were sure that new coolies would not refuse to enter into an agreement on their arrival on the garden, I would use Section 90. I have no experience of contractors' coolies and from what I hear of them I do not want them. I do not, however, think that we can do without contractors, as new gardens would still require them.

I am against the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196, as it takes so long to get a warrant, and having invested so much money in our coolies, we must have some summary means of catching them if they desert. I have as a matter of fact only arrested coolies twice under these sections.

I renew contracts under Act XIII, and pay a bonus of R12 for men and R10 for women. My wages are fixed on a sliding scale. If wages are R5 per man and R4 per woman under an agreement under Act XIII, and if a man does 22 full haziris and a woman 20 full haziris, the pay for the month is calculated at the rate of a rupee extra. Coolies without agreements are paid R6 per man and R5 per woman, and they receive pay at the same extra rate if they work 22 and 20 haziris, as in the case of the agreement coolies. I pay one

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gang of basti labour R7, as they live at a distance. I give these favourable rates because mine is a new garden with a good outturn. My hoeing task is 30 to 35 *nals*.

I would be willing to reduce the term of the initial contract to three years. I think that local Act VI contracts might go.

I think that if Act VI were done away with we might be able to increase the pay to R6 and R5, as we should not then be compelled to give sick haziris, etc., but otherwise we could not do so. I am of opinion that it would be a mistake to increase tasks in order to give a rise of pay. I should have no objection to the statement of the pay in terms of a daily instead of a monthly wage. I think it would tend to make new coolies more contented, if they knew exactly what they are to get when they arrive on the garden.

I grant leave freely to my coolies. I consider that the free grant of leave does much to make the labour force healthy and contented.

I have not so far given land to my coolies, as the garden being a new one none is as yet available. I hope, however, to give out some rice land next year, as land is appreciated by the coolies. The offer of land by Government on easy terms to coolies who have served a term of years on a tea garden would, I think, serve to attract labour to the Province.

I consider that the offer of repatriation after the expiry of the contract would also attract people, but I do not think that many coolies would avail themselves of the concession. Coolies who go home on leave generally go as recruiters. I would be prepared to support a system of giving a few selected coolies return tickets to their homes in the cold weather, in order that they should look up their friends.

I should favour the establishment of a Central Agency for the supervision of contractors and for the distribution of recruits at fixed prices to those gardens requiring labour.

In Act XIII I should like it to be laid down how days on which the coolie has worked less than a full haziri are to be treated with reference to the contract period. I suggest that the number of days worked should be taken to be the total number of full haziris at the end of the month on which pay is calculated. This would also simplify the refund of advances.

I supply Act VI coolies only with rice at R3 per maund. When rice is scarce, I supply it to non-Act coolies at cost price.

8TH MAY 1906.

No. 181.—MR. G. V. BURROWES, *Halmira Tea Estate, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

I have a labour force of 1¼ coolies per acre. Only new coolies are under Act VI. For two or three years I did no recruiting, but for the last two years I have sent down sardars; they have brought up about 2½ souls each this year; they were recruiting in Dumka, Bilaspur and Hazaribagh. I think that sardari recruiting under the present Act is very unsatisfactory. I refer especially to delays in the depôt.

I think that the withdrawal of Act VI from the Surma Valley will make that Valley more popular than Assam, and for my part I am quite willing to be put on the same footing. I should, however, like to see a provision in Act XIII making an employer who engaged within a certain number of years a coolie that I had imported, liable for the cost of importation.

I think that it is a good idea that honorary magistrates should be appointed to issue warrants against absconders, and that this would be a fair substitute for Sections 195 and 196. My coolies imported free are under no contract or advance, and I have not yet thought when I will give them a bonus for an Act XIII agreement. I give bonuses of R12 and R10, the pay being R5 and R4. I would give these new coolies rice at R3 a maund if they asked for it, but they do not. I think that the importer should have a hold over the coolie for three years. I give my coolies all the rice land I can; some 50 per cent. of them have land. They also lease land from the Assamese. I would not object to bringing up coolies on a three-year contract with a promise of repatriation at the end. The system prevails here of an Act XIII coolie going to the magistrate and asking for a *hathchit*, and when the employer reports that he has no claim on the coolie the magistrate gives him a *hathchit*. I think that the magistrate should refuse this. I should like to see contractors, if retained, licensed, and stop their operations from October to May so as to give the sardars a free hand. If a sardar does not bring coolies, I recover the advance from him, except his travelling expenses. The sardar gets no pay while away from the garden. I do not think that it would be a good thing to offer wages as high as R8 with a view of attracting temporary labour. Nunias come up for road work in the cold weather here; some of them bring their women. Earthwork is R5 a thousand cubic feet.

I think that there is a good deal of abortion among coolie women, and I believe the motive is that they find children a nuisance when they have to work. I generally give a woman 3 or 4 months' leave at child-birth; I never put a woman on to hard work till the child is fairly big.

No. 182.—Mr. Shuldham H. Shaw, *Managing Proprietor, Mohima Tea Estate, Golaghat, Sibsagar.* **Sibsagar.**

I have about 570 acres under tea with a labour force of about 600 working adults and 60 or 70 working children. Basti Bengali coolies who work on the garden are included in these figures. In addition I get up to 30 or 40 Assamese coolies from the villages, and a few Cacharis. My labour force is sufficient for my requirements, and I have had to send orders to my local agent not to send any more up. I have been importing labour through sardars chiefly under Section 90. I have not experienced any difficulty in recruiting under that section. I recruited this year principally in the Santal Pergannas and to a lesser extent in Chaibassa, Ranchi and Banda. I get Kols from Banda. The results have been best in the Santal Pergannas as I have a good connection there in a particular locality. The Santal coolies give a two years' contract under Section 492, I. P. C., in their country. They objected to come up unless they were given a two years' contract. Only about 30 of my coolies are under Act VI. I use Act XIII on the garden. The agreements are for 313 haziris, with an advance of R12 for men and R10 for women, the pay being R6 and R5, respectively. I consider Act XIII is very unsatisfactory. It is not definite enough and rules passed by one Lieutenant-Governor may be altered by his successor. I pay not a bonus but an advance, which is regularly deducted from the coolie's pay. I object to magistrates releasing a coolie from his agreement until it has been worked out to the last day. I know a case of this having been done.

I have been down in the recruiting districts, and I think that the chief obstacle to a free flow of labour to Assam is the fact that the Province has an exceedingly bad name in the recruiting districts. I am of opinion that the chief reason for the prejudice against Assam is that the relations of persons who have emigrated here in the majority of cases never hear of them again. The family ties amongst the cultivating classes in Bengal are very strong. Another deterrent is the depôt, of which coolies have a horror. They think that they are ill-treated and robbed in depôts, and separated from members of their family. Competition of other industries, mines, etc., decreases the flow of labour, but I am certain that the rate of pay does not affect the supply. I mean that the addition of an extra rupee to the coolie's wages would not make any difference, and we could not afford more.

I think that though coolies like to have a contract, the four years' agreement is too long and acts as a deterrent. My experience is that people are quite willing to emigrate on a two years' contract. Coolies nearly always renew their agreements after the expiry of two years.

Personally it would make no difference to me if contractors were abolished, but I think that the industry is not ready for so drastic a step, until some other system is evolved to take its place. I am, however, strongly of opinion that all contractors should be licensed and that the free recruiting by contractors under Section 92 should be done away with, as it does more harm to our sardari recruiting than anything else. I mean that arkatis buy our sardars' coolies.

I am in favour of the retention of Sections 195 and 196 as coolies generally abscond for reasons other than dislike of the management of the garden, and there must be some deterrent to prevent coolies deserting. At present they believe that they will be caught if they desert, and this acts as a deterrent on desertion among all classes of coolies, as those who are not under Act VI are often under the impression that they can be arrested. I do not think that the appointment of honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants would quite replace Sections 195 and 196, but such a concession would be better than nothing if these sections are withdrawn. I think, however, that coolies arrested under these sections should be always taken before a magistrate and not back to the garden direct, as is sometimes done. I am of opinion that if these sections were done away with, there would be much more chaukidaring than at present, and I do not consider that they have had any effect on recruiting, or in inducing the idea, which exists in the recruiting districts, that people cannot get away from Assam. I would leave Act VI as it is for the present, as the country is not ready for its withdrawal, but Section 90 should be extended to all districts in which it is not now in force, and all contractors should be licensed. My opinion is that Act VI will die a natural death in time. If managers or their accredited agents recruit their own labour and are given every facility to do so, there will soon be no need for contractors, and Assam will lose its bad name. In one case my local agent was kept waiting for three weeks before he could get his license signed with the result that I could not afford to wait any longer and transferred him elsewhere.

I do not see how a Central Agency is to be worked unless it is independent of tea-garden agents and gardens, but if it could be started on an independent basis, I think it would be a good thing.

I let coolies who have been 7 or 8 years on the garden have some of my land on easy terms as a reward for long service. I do not think that it would be advisable to offer land to new coolies as an inducement to emigrate, as new immigrants ought to be kept in the lines for some years so that their health may be looked after. Coolies with land generally like to live near it. Another objection is that cultivation takes coolies off work during the busy season. I think that the offer in the recruiting districts of Government land in the immediate vicinity of the importing garden on easy terms to intending emigrants, after they had served a certain number of years on a garden, might induce a larger number of persons to emigrate, but the concession would not be of much benefit to those gardens with no waste land in the vicinity.

Sibsagar.

I am of opinion that the offer of repatriation after the expiry of the contract would have a very beneficial effect on recruiting, and as a matter of fact I have promised to send my Santals to their homes if they desire it after five years' residence on the garden. It would undoubtedly be a good thing if coolies were sent down more freely to their country on leave, but a manager with a short labour force may not be able to do this, and there is always the danger of the coolies being snapped up by arkatis.

Coolies prefer travelling by steamer to travelling by railway. The fare from the Santal Pergannas to my garden is R8-13-9 *vid* Dhubri-Negrating, and R9-3-9 *vid* Dhubri-Gauhati and Kamarbandhali. I should like to see fares reduced between this and the recruiting districts. From all that I have heard of the tin ticket system, I think it might be adopted for Assam with advantage. Some means ought to be devised for keeping flies off the coolies' cooked food on steamers, as cholera is not infrequently contracted on board steamers, and I have noticed flies settling on the cooked food, and infection is probably carried in this way. I should like to see special coolie corridor trains running twice a week from recruiting centres, with cooked food and hospital accommodation provided. This would do much to prevent infection by cholera *en route*.

No. 183.—Mr. P. G. Rogers, I. C. S., *Sub-divisional Officer, Golaghat, Sibsagar.*

I have been 3½ months in charge of this Sub-division. I have not previously been stationed in a tea district in Assam. I receive on an average one petition a day from tea-garden coolies, generally asking for discharge certificates. As a rule such coolies are not under agreement. I think the main reason why they ask for such certificates is that they fear the line chaukidars. A certificate is also a protection to them on journeys. Public Works Department muharrirs and ticket clerks and other subordinates occasionally obstruct coolies and try to impress them on journeys. In Act VI desertion cases coolies are generally arrested on warrant. Cases in which coolies are arrested by the employer generally do not come into court. I am of opinion that no local contracts, whether under Act VI or Act XIII should be legal unless entered into before a magistrate. This would give coolies time to reflect and would do away with any suspicion of undue influence. I do not think that a coolie always knows what he is doing when he enters into an agreement, and he sometimes does so because he thinks that he cannot get away. As far as casual leave is concerned, I think that as much is now granted as is necessary. As regards the other points mentioned in the Committee's note I should prefer not to express an opinion, as I have been here for such a short time.

CINNAMARA, 9th May 1906.

(Mr. Robertson *absent.*)

No. 184.—Mr. F. A. Sachse, I.C.S., *Sub-divisional Officer, Jorhat, Sibsagar.*

I have been in charge of this Sub-division since the end of last November. I had no previous experience of tea districts. I get about an average of five desertion cases a week, equally divided between Act VI and Act XIII. I receive also about two miscellaneous petitions a week from coolies asking for discharge certificates. Since I have been here three coolies have been prosecuted for enticement. There are 53 gardens liable to separate inspection in the Sub-division. In most cases discharge certificates are applied for by a man or woman whose agreement has expired, and whose wife or husband has still some time to serve. Discharge certificates are given to Act XIII coolies who apply for them, after reference to the manager. Very little use is made of the right of private arrest here, and I do not think that the section is abused. I estimate that not more than one quarter of the coolie population is under Act VI. Nearly all gardens give second agreements under Act XIII, but a few use Act VI local agreements. Gardens with a settled population and plenty of *dhan* land and which do not need to recruit much, almost exclusively use Act XIII. Gardens owned by natives do not recruit practically at all. They have *dhan* land, and the garden staff are said to be generally high class Brahmans who have much influence with the coolies. On one native-owned garden I know of, the coolies are well chaukidared, so do not get a chance of bolting. Generally coolies are just as willing to remain on a native-owned garden as on one managed by an European, though they do not receive the same concessions as regards sick and pregnant leave as on European gardens.

Labour conditions are generally settled in this Sub-division and the coolies are contented. I believe that the reason coolies do not send money back to their homes in the recruiting districts is because they spend all their money on their families here. Coolies have many head of cattle and live well. I do not think that the withdrawal of Act VI would have any effect in this Sub-division. I would like to see Act XIII amended so that a conviction should not operate as a release. I only know of one garden where the natural conditions would favour the forcible retention of the coolies. As a rule I think that pressure is not put on coolies to renew their agreements.

I believe that the appointment of honorary magistrates with powers to issue warrants would do away with much of the opposition to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196.

The great desire of the coolies is to get a piece of land and they rent land at exorbitant prices from the Assamese. I think that there is Government waste land available for the settlement of coolies near most gardens in this Sub-division.

No. 185.—Mr. St. G. A. Showers, *Superintendent, Jorhat Tea Company, Sibsagar.*

I have 5,600 acres of tea under me, with a labour force of about 6,000, and I can get in over 1,000 other labourers from the bastis. I send down sardars every year; last year our sardars brought up about 2 coolies per head and this year I hope for 3. We send down about 200 sardars each year. The drain on the labour force consists of deaths, absconders and men who move into the bastis. Our annual loss is about 6 per cent. now: it used to be 10 per cent. It now varies from 3 per cent. to 13 per cent. on different gardens. The Cinnamara garden has lost heavily for two years from epidemic disease. Few sardari coolies abscond; contractors' coolies abscond during their first 6 months. Last year I got about 200 contractors' coolies, of whom quite 40 absconded; some of these were arrested. Many contractors' coolies come up with the intention of bolting; others have no idea of what they are really coming to. The sardari coolie keeps his health better because he has his friends to look after him. I divide the contractors' coolies among the old coolies, and the old coolie gets a bonus of R4 or R5 if the new man is on the garden at the end of his agreement. I am in favour of having all contractors licensed, but I think that it is necessary to keep the contractor.

I think that the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will affect our recruiting because their sardars will have an advantage in working free from all control. I have made little use of Section 90. Sardars do not complain of hindrance on the way up. I send my sardars to a local agent and it would always be necessary to have a European to supervise them. I have very few men to whom I could give R100 and tell them to go and bring up coolies by themselves. My sardari coolies cost R70 last year on an average, ranging from R100 to R50. If a sardar draws more than R20 advance and gets no coolie, half the excess is recovered from him.

I think that we should lose if Act VI were withdrawn from this district. I do not think that Act XIII or Section 492, Indian Penal Code, would give us sufficient control over our labour. A mere Section 492, Indian Penal Code, contract would make the new coolie inclined to abscond or refuse to work, and we should have constant litigation. I am trying to induce a flow of labour to and fro by sending down sardars without much hope of their getting coolies, but merely to keep in touch with the recruiting districts. If these men do not stay more than two months they are charged nothing. I should be prepared to forego Sections 195 and 196 if magistrates used the telegraph to secure the execution of warrants, and if honorary magistrates were appointed in areas at a distance from the courts.

A good 10 per cent. of my coolies have paddy land. I have given out some 500 or 600 acres and have more available. I give it practically to any coolie who asks; new coolies seldom apply for it. I do not think that my sardars have been instructed to make it known that the coolie can get a plot of rice land as well as his monthly pay, but I will have this done in future. I have no objection to having the contract wage stated as a daily wage.

The native-owned garden gives a bonus of R15 and R10 against our R12 and R6, and we only give R12 to a man able to do full work. Some of the native gardens pay wages of R6 and R5, and the work is generally done in a more free and easy way, which suits the coolie.

My hoeing *nirikh* is 25 or 30 *nals*, and ticca is three annas for 25 *nals*; outsiders get four annas ticca. A fair percentage of my coolies work steadily all the month and probably on the average they work 20 days a month. I calculate that 20 per cent. of the labour is absent daily and in the height of the rains 25 per cent. I have never brought coolies up on the understanding that they would be repatriated at the expiry of their contract, but I should have no objection to trying the experiment. If Government would import first class labour at R50 a head, I would be willing to give the coolie R50, and let him settle on Government land at the end of his contract. At any rate I think that a scheme would be worth consideration under which Government and the planter should join in importing immigrants.

I consider that Act XIII works satisfactorily. I should like to see Section 90 extended to all districts. My coolies come up by steamer and I think that the conditions of the journey up are satisfactory. I am not sure that return tickets would be an advantage; but when the railway is open to Gauhati I think some system of passes should be devised.

I have taken great interest in the question of the birth-rate for 4 or 5 years. I have found that increasing the leave after a birth has had a good effect. We now give two months' leave on full pay after child-birth. If possible, we make the woman work up to a week before the birth; but she only gets light work for some time previous. To let her sit idle is not good for her. Leave after child-birth is good for the child as well as for the mother. I am certain that some years ago there was a good deal of abortion. There were women who lived by causing abortion in others. The motive for causing abortion was I think the desire of the women not to lose their earnings.

I have no objection to a magistrate giving a *hathchit* to a time-expired Act XIII coolie.

Sibsagar.

I give renewed contracts under Act VI where the coolie is a difficult man to manage. These men get the same bonus as under Act XIII, and the contract is as a rule for one year. I should have no objection to local Act VI contracts being abolished.

I should much object to taking contractors' coolies on less than a three years' contract. We might do with less in the case of sardari recruits. I doubt whether the abolition of Act VI would reduce the price of contractors' coolies. I should like to see a Central Recruiting Agency scheme tried. The Tea Districts Labour Supply Association might run it with Government support; that is, the present opposition of Government officers to recruiting would have to be replaced by active approval.

I do not think that the tea industry could afford to pay a higher rate of wage than at present.

My coolies are constantly corresponding with their friends in their country and I encourage this as much as possible.

No. 186.—Mr. R. G. Sisson, *Manager, Kathalguri Tea Estate, Salonah Tea Company, Sibsagar.*

I have 909 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,022 working people, including children. I get practically no basti labour. I have enough coolies to work the garden. I sent down 30 sardars this year to recruit, and up to date they have brought back about 49 adults, counting two children as one adult. I have had no contractors' coolies lately. I sent down some sardars under Chapter IV and some under Section 90. The results have been pretty much the same under both. I have had no complaints from my sardars as to obstructions in the recruiting districts. Most of my coolies are imported under contract under Act VI. The few imported under Section 90 have not been put under contract yet. I should be inclined to put them under Act VI.

I renew contracts under Act XIII. I give a bonus of R12 to men and R8 to women, and the pay is R5 and R4 respectively. I am quite satisfied with Act XIII. I do not suffer much from enticement.

There is practically no rice land on my garden available for letting out to coolies. If I had any, I should certainly let it out to them.

I have been through the recruiting districts, and I know that there is an impression that coolies who come to Assam cannot get away again, but I do not think that Sections 195 and 196 are responsible for this feeling. The fact that coolies very seldom return to their country because they prefer to settle down here, has probably given rise to this impression. I should therefore, most certainly be opposed to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196, as I think we should have some hold on the coolies we import as a security for the money we have spent. As a matter of fact I have used these sections but little, but I think that their moral effect in retaining labour is very great. I am of opinion that if these sections were withdrawn a good many coolies, especially contractors' coolies, would abscond. This would result rather from enticement, in the case of sardars' coolies, than because labour on tea-gardens is unpopular. Contractors' coolies are always liable to abscond.

I should not object to the reduction of the term of the contract to three years. If a coolie is any use at all he ought to settle down in three years at most.

I have heard it said in the recruiting districts that the pay offered is low compared to what coolies can get near their homes. I do not, however, think that the tea-industry could afford a rise of pay unless the cost of importation is reduced. The only people who come to us are those who have determined to emigrate and who do not therefore consider the wage question at all. I should have no objection to the statement of the wage as a daily instead of a monthly one, and I think the fact that coolies can earn over-time pay should be explained at the time of engagement.

I give casual leave as freely as I can. I should be prepared to allow selected coolies leave for three or four months in the cold weather. I would even give them return tickets if other gardens agreed to do the same.

Unless Government shared the cost of importation, I would not advocate coolies being brought up under the promise of receiving a piece of Government land after having served for several years on a garden. It would not benefit me much as there is no available waste fit for growing rice near my garden.

I would be prepared to offer intending emigrants the option of repatriation at the expiry of the four years' contract. I have never given the system a trial.

I consider that the contractor is a necessary evil, but I would have them all licensed. I am in favour of a Central Recruiting Agency working under the Indian Tea Association. What we require is combination among planters, and we shall never get that until it is enforced by legislation. I think it would be a very good thing if Government would take it up.

I consider that the withdrawal of Act VI in the Surma Valley will lead to confusion because the sardars from the two Valleys will be working under different systems. I think that the Cachar sardars will sell their coolies to Assam sardars and *vice versâ*.

I should like to see Section 90 extended to those districts in which it is not now in force.

I do not think that there will ever be a greater flow of labour to Assam, because if people begin to emigrate in larger numbers the local officials would check the movement in order to provide labour for their own industries, which are increasing very rapidly.

I saw many Rajputana and Gujerati coolies on relief works, and I do not think that they would suit us. We might get a few people from Behar, but the ordinary Behari would not suit us.

NOTE.—In a letter, dated 10th May 1906, Mr. Sisson draws attention to the fact that the daily wage earned by a labourer in the recruiting districts is not a reliable indication of his average monthly earnings per annum, as work on good wages is not always obtainable. He suggests that the average wages earned by a few selected labourers in the recruiting districts for 12 months should be compiled.

No. 187.—MR. D. SLIMMON, *Manager, Cinnamara Tea Estate, Sibsagar.*

I think that Sections 195 and 196 are going into disuse. I should not object to their abolition if magistrates used the telegraph to secure the execution of warrants. I should not object to the abolition of the local Act VI contract. We now only have 6 or 8 local Act VI contracts a year. Seven years ago this garden was entirely under Act I of 1882. Our other garden had been using Act XIII before and so it was introduced at Cinnamara. It had been thought before that Act VI contracts were advisable owing to our nearness to Jorhat. Especially during the last six years labour has become more difficult to procure; the main remedy is improved facilities for recruiting. I should like the sardar to be licensed and go down to a local agent licensed in the recruiting district; when the sardar had brought in his coolies the local agent would report their names and particulars to the local magistrate, and 24 hours after this the coolies should be allowed to be removed. This system would, I think, reduce the cost of recruiting, and the demand for contractors' coolies would diminish. If the cost of contractors' coolies were thereby lessened, I should be prepared to see the term of initial contract shortened to three years. We joined in the Santal Emigration Scheme which included a promise of repatriation after one year. About 70 per cent. of the coolies went back and the remainder stayed. I have no means of ascertaining whether any of these 70 per cent. returned again to Assam, but among the Santals we got were some who had served before in Dibrugarh; we got mostly single men under the scheme. I would not advocate the abolition of the contractor until we see how the improved sardari recruiting would work. All contractors ought certainly to be licensed.

I am satisfied with Act XIII, but if it is modified, I should like to have a clause penalizing enticement. My coolies are encouraged to correspond freely with their friends; they often receive letters asking for money or assistance to emigrate.

Some years ago I had some North-West coolies but they did not stand the climate.

10TH MAY 1906.

No. 188.—BABU DEBI CHARAN BARUA, *Proprietor and Manager, Kakodanga Tea Estate, Sibsagar.*

I have 170 acres under tea with a labour force of about 200. When necessary I can get in 20 to 25 people from the bastis. My coolies are engaged locally; most are under Act XIII, a few being under local Act VI contract which I tried as an experiment. I have no objection to the abolition of local Act VI contracts. I give bonuses of R12-8 and R10-8. Wages are R5 and R4. My light hoeing task is 25 or 30 *nals*. Ticca is 4 annas for 25 *nals*. As my labour force is ample there is not much ticca. We have no muster; I pay once a month, generally in the first week of a month. I think that the popularity of a garden depends largely on early payments. I am in favour of the abolition of the right of private arrest. I am contented with the working of Act XIII. I have given out from 30 to 35 acres of rice land; this is all that I have. Some of my coolies have taken up rice land outside. My coolies work on the average not less than 20 days in the month. I could do without Act VI altogether. I would reduce the term of Act VI contracts to three years and give the coolie the right to demand repatriation after six years' service. I should like Government to promise land to coolies after a certain number of years service. The industry cannot afford increased wages unless tasks are also raised. A good coolie finishes his task in 6 hours; a lazy man takes 8 and only does four-fifths of his task in the time.

No. 189.—MR. B. C. PHUKAN, *Manager, Bowriah Tea Estate, Jorhat, Sibsagar.*

The area of my garden under tea is 234 acres, and I have a labour force of 300 working coolies including children, which is sufficient for my requirements. Last year I sent down two sardars and they brought up two coolies. This year some of my coolies went to Ganjam on leave and brought up eight of their relations as free labourers. The latter were put under Act XIII contracts for two and three years. I gave them no bonus, but paid their expenses up and those of the people who recruited them. Most of my coolies are under Act XIII, but I

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have a few under Act VI who were imported under agreements under that Act. I renew under Act XIII, and give a bonus of R12 for men and R8 for women; the wages are R5 and R4, respectively. Act XIII suits our requirements fairly well, but it is a drawback that a conviction under it operates as a release, and that there is no provision in it penalizing enticement. I should oppose the withdrawal of Act VI because it would render it more difficult for us to recruit and retain our labour. If Act XIII were amended in the directions indicated, local contracts under Act VI might be abolished.

I object to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196, because communications have improved so much that a coolie can get clear away before we can obtain a warrant against him.

If the expenditure on the importation of coolies were reduced we might reduce the term of the initial contract. The unnecessary delays, due to the way in which registration is sometimes carried out in the recruiting districts, tend to increase the cost of labour.

The circumstances of the industry would render an increase of pay to the coolie impossible at present.

Most of my coolies have been given rice land, generally about an acre each. I think it would be a good thing if Government land on easy terms were offered in the recruiting districts to emigrants who had served several years on a tea-garden. I am of opinion that such an offer would attract people.

I fear that when the Act is withdrawn in the Surma Valley it will affect our recruiting, as people will not go to the Upper Assam districts under the Act when they can go to the Surma Valley free.

I consider that the recruitment of labour should be the duty of a Government Department. This would do away with all abuses. I dislike the contractor's system, and should prefer to see it abolished altogether as our sardars would then be in a better position. If contractors are retained they should be licensed.

I give my sardars a bonus of R5 per coolie recruited. We recover any advances made to the emigrants, but not their way expenses. The sardars receive *khoraki* during the time they are recruiting.

No. 190.—Mr. J. Lawrence, *Manager, East India Tea Company, Jorhat, Sibsagar.*

I have 1,200 acres under tea with a labour force of about 1,450. This is sufficient. I have done a little sardari recruiting of late years. I have taken 20 to 30 contractors' coolies this year, because they were sent up by my agents to introduce fresh blood. Sardari coolies cost about R70. An unsuccessful sardar is credited with three months' pay and his journey expenses. Any excess advance is recovered. I take local contracts under Act XIII and have no objection to the abolition of local Act VI contracts. I think that free recruiting for the Surma Valley will damage recruiting for the Assam Valley. I have not used Section 90 myself. I think that if Sections 195 and 196 are abolished the Act may as well go. Their abolition would merely encourage the professional bolter. I should be willing to reduce the initial contract to two years, if it would ensure a greater supply of labour.

It is very desirable that Government officers should favour emigration to Assam instead of obstructing it. I have no objection to the contract wage being stated as a daily wage. I think it would be a good thing for sardars to be supplied with a vernacular statement of the advantages offered by the garden. I give land to any respectable man who asks for it and, many of my coolies sub-lease land from the Assamese. I should like to know details before approving of a Government colonization scheme. I should have no objection to importing coolies with a promise of repatriation at the end of a term of years.

Cases of abortion occur, but in my opinion the birth-rate is generally good. I give practically what leave is asked for to women at the time of child-birth. Non-Act coolies get no pay during this time, but advances are given when necessary. Pregnant women are inspected once a week to see how they are getting on.

I should like the facilities for travelling to be improved, and everything done to cheapen and shorten the journey to Assam. My coolies come up by steamer. Personally I should be glad to see the contractor abolished. I should like to see Section 90 extended to all districts. Coolies practically take what leave they want. We cannot afford to increase pay.

No. 191.—Mr. J. P. Ferguson, *Manager, Hunwoal Tea Company, Moriani, Sibsagar.*

I have 1,540 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,650 working coolies, including about 20 basti labourers and 75 Cacharis. The force is barely sufficient for my requirments. I have been obtaining coolies through both sardars and contractors. I sent down 56 sardars this year. About 30 of them have returned up to date bringing 45 working people. The sardars worked under Chapter IV. They were sent chiefly to the Central Provinces and to Ranchi. I would have sent the Central Provinces sardars down under Section 90, if I had been here when they were being despatched. I should like to

see Section 90 extended to those districts in which it is not in force. Every sardar complains of the rigour of the enquiries made by magistrates in the recruiting districts. I think that sardars are so nervous of these enquiries that they sell their coolies to arkatis rather than appear before a magistrate. I attribute the bad results of sardari recruiting in recent years to the way Act VI has been worked in the recruiting districts. If a sardar brings back no coolies, I only recover a nominal sum from him. I pay a bonus of from R10 to R15 per recruit. I credit a sardar with full pay during the time he is in the recruiting districts, and when he returns I balance the amount of pay due and of the bonuses earned against the recruiting advances and I pay him the balance if any. All sardari coolies are imported under contract under Act VI. They cost on an average between R70 and R80 per adult.

I have got about 35 contractors' coolies up to date this year from Sambalpur. They came up free, but I intend putting them under Act VI contracts. They cost me from R115 to R135 landed here. This year's batch of contractors' coolies is satisfactory, but this is not always the case. Contractors' coolies are very apt to desert, especially during the first year, but their health is usually as good as that of sardari coolies, provided they are of equal physique. I would not be prepared to see contractors abolished, but I should like to see them all licensed.

I consider that the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 would affect us prejudicially, especially a garden like mine which is situated near the railway; as it takes so long to get a warrant, a coolie would be a long way off before it could be executed. I do not think that the appointment of honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants would quite replace Sections 195 and 196. Warrants would need to be executed by wire, but even this would not make up for the loss of those sections. Several coolies of my garden were arrested under these sections last year. Absconding coolies who are arrested generally remain on the garden, unless they are of the professional bolter class, who are determined to get away and abscond again.

I think that the fact that Cachar and Sylhet, after the withdrawal of Act VI, will be able to recruit labour free, while we shall still be under the Act, will affect us prejudicially and will attract our labour to the Surma Valley.

I do not think that it would be possible to raise the pay of coolies, unless we get a larger and cheaper supply of labour. I should have no objection to the statement of the pay in terms of a daily instead of a monthly wage, and I should like to see the other advantages offered advertised more freely in the recruiting districts.

I would be prepared to reduce the term of the initial contract, provided that we get a larger supply of labour at lower rates by doing so.

I would be willing to send down selected coolies every cold weather to visit their homes and even to give them return tickets.

I have given out about 50 acres of rice land to my coolies, and I have plenty more land suitable for rice cultivation. I give out plots of land to people who ask for them. I have never tried the experiment of offering coolies in their country a plot of land as an inducement to emigrate, but I should be prepared to try this. The coolies who hold land are granted from one to two months leave for cultivation. As an inducement to emigration, I think it would be a good thing if Government would offer land on easy terms to coolies who serve for five or six years on a garden, this offer to be made to people in the recruiting districts and not to coolies now on gardens.

Native-managed gardens attract labour because there is very little discipline on them. Such gardens are as a rule not so well managed as European-managed gardens.

I think that if labour were more easily got, it ought to be incumbent on us to repatriate all coolies who have been six years on the garden and who desire to return to their homes.

A Central Agency worked by the Tea Association would be an excellent thing if it could be managed, but I doubt if it would be feasible as the distribution of the coolies would be a great difficulty.

I have a fair birth-rate on my garden. I give leave freely to pregnant women, sometimes as much as six months. My births have been about double my deaths this year. On my Nagadhuli garden abortions were so common that there was a Government enquiry, but nothing came of it. I cannot suggest a motive for the causing of abortions. The practice has decreased on the garden during the last two years.

I would like to see special cheap rates given on railways for coolies and better accommodation provided. I think coolies prefer journeys by rail to journeys by steamer. They do not like the red coats and cooked food with which they are supplied, but I have never heard them objecting to the cooked food supplied on steamers.

No. 192.—Mr. J. Begg, *Manager, Hoolungoori Tea Company, Jorhat, Sibsagar.*

I have 400 acres under tea with a labour force of about 1,250. I have recruited through sardars for 18 years on end. After 1898 the results became worse. For a time the results dropped to about two coolies a sardar. They have lately improved again. I think that it is

Sibsagar. important to keep up the connection with the recruiting districts by constantly sending down sardars. My sardars have for many years back complained of the interference of arkatis and of difficulties attending registration, especially of single women.

All my coolies come up under Act VI contracts. I should not object to the term of initial contract being altered to three years, provided we got more sympathetic assistance in recruiting. I renew under Act XIII. I should not object to local Act VI contracts being abolished. Act XIII works well provided that proceedings under it are expedited. If Act VI went altogether, I should like provisions against harbouring and enticing inserted in the law. Act VI at present has a moral effect on the entire labour force.

I should like to have the contractor completely wiped out. I think that labourers might be brought up on a promise of repatriation at the end of not less than 5 or 6 years.

I have little land to give my coolies, but they are able to obtain any quantity of land on sub-leases.

I should not favour a Central Recruiting Agency. I have no complaints to make about transport to Assam. A local agent is necessary to supervise the sardars in the recruiting districts. I give my sardars R15 bonus on each coolie they bring up. I allow a sardar to draw advances up to four months' pay; he is paid, besides his travelling expenses, R20 and R15 a coolie and the advances are deducted from this. This year about 25 sardars have sent up 68 souls.

I should not care to have honorary magistrates appointed for the purpose of issuing warrants under Act XIII. We cannot afford an increase of pay. The coolie is very well paid.

For the last three years my birth-rate has considerably exceeded my death-rate. This was not the case 10 or 15 years ago. I have in recent years been much more lenient in granting leave. This has certainly decreased infantile mortality. I let pregnant women have practically what leave they want. In the rains I employ women with babies in the tea-house and set apart a place for the children. A woman generally takes at least two months' leave after the birth of her child. A European doctor grants the leave before the birth takes place.

Act XIII women do not get paid during the period of leave.

I have had to constantly recruit, because I have been extending acreage and it is also necessary to make up for deaths.

No. 193.—Mr. W. H. Robinson, *Manager, Sangsua Division, Moabund Tea Company, Sibsagar.*

The area of the Moabund Tea Company's property is about 3,600 acres, and the labour force is between 6,000 and 7,000 working coolies, of whom 3,400 are under agreement under Act VI. We renew agreements under Act VI. Act XIII is used almost exclusively for women, their husbands being under Act VI. As a rule the local Act VI agreements are for 2 or 3 years. We use local Act VI contracts chiefly as a protection against enticement, especially by native-owned gardens. I had a case in Court to-day in which 23 persons were enticed away, and had not the adults been under Act VI we should have had no hold at all over them. I should be opposed to the abolition of local Act VI contracts, unless we were allowed the power of private arrest under Act XIII and unless a provision penalizing enticement is added. A conviction under Act XIII also should not operate as a release. There has been difficulty in getting warrants issued in one Sub-division and executed in another Sub-division, and this affects us considerably as we are just on the borders of the Jorhat Sub-division.

I should not like to see Sections 195 and 196 withdrawn.

We recruit largely every year. This year in my division we have recruited up to date 145 coolies, all of them except 20 being sardari coolies. We sent down 160 sardars. Our labour force is fairly up to our requirements, but we cannot have too many coolies, as the larger the labour force the more leave we can give for cultivation, etc.

I pay a bonus of R12 per annum to men on renewal of Act VI contracts. Women receive a bonus of R4 for an Act XIII contract. The majority of our coolies are brought up under Act VI contracts. Those who come up free are given Act VI contracts for three years on arrival.

It becomes more difficult to obtain labour every year. Some of our sardars return empty-handed. The drop in recruiting was first felt about 1901. I have never been down to the recruiting districts, so am not in a position to express an opinion as to the reasons for the decreased supply of labour.

If we were really put to it to get labour, I should be prepared to reduce the term of the contract to two years. I would also be willing to promise repatriation to coolies who have spent four years on the garden. What we object to is coolies whom we have imported being enticed on to other gardens which never import labour, and not to their returning to their homes. I consider that a provision, which would provide for the summary recovery of the cost of importation of a coolie from the garden to which he may have absconded, would be better than proceeding against the coolie. But even if we had such a system legalised it would not replace Act VI, which enables us to maintain discipline on our gardens. I think

that if the coolies realised that we had no hold on them, it would increase the number of desertions considerably.

We have given out all our available rice land to coolies to cultivate. Plots of land are given to good coolies old or new at a nominal rental as a reward. We have never offered land to people in the recruiting districts as an inducement to emigrate, but I should be prepared to do so, if it is likely to attract more people.

We have to recruit because we have increased our acreage greatly within the last 10 years. My death-rate is between 1 and 2 per cent., and my birth-rate is considerably in excess of that. We give no bonus on births, but we allow pregnant women 3 months' leave on half-pay, and they sometimes get as much as 6 months. Abortions are very rarely procured.

I should like to see the contractors' system abolished altogether. If contractors are retained I certainly think that they should be licensed.

I do not think that we are reduced to such straits for labour as to justify a system of the promise in the recruiting districts of land by Government to emigrants who have served a term of years on a garden, being tried.

When I send down a sardar the local agent is instructed to advance him up to R30, even if he gets no coolies. If he gets coolies the local agent uses his discretion in making further advances. The sardar receives no pay when he is down, but he receives a bonus of R10 to R5, per head diminishing as the cost per head of the recruits increases from R60 to R90. Over R90 he gets no commission. The advances made to the sardar are not recovered unless the local agent reports that he has been playing tricks.

NAZIRA, 11TH MAY 1906.

(MR. ROBERTSON *absent.*)

No. 194.—MR. R. N. FARQUHARSON, *General Manager, Assam Company, Nazira, Sibsagar.*

We have 9,379 acres under tea with a labour force of 14,462. Except newly imported coolies almost all our labourers are under Act XIII. Last season (1904-05) we imported 1,229 souls equivalent to 941½ adults. Of these, 205 souls were contractors' coolies. Of the whole number 682 came up free, 28 under Section 492, Indian Penal Code and 518 under Act VI.

Sardars brought up 1,003 souls. When we send down sardars we put them under a one-year Act VI agreement. I should have no objection to the abolition of local Act VI contracts provided that some hold were given us over our sardars. There are some of our gardens on which the labour force cannot be maintained entirely by sardari recruiting; some gardens with a short labour force and a heavy wastage have to depend partly on contractors' coolies. A few gardens in this district could get along entirely by sardari recruiting. I am not prepared to see the contractor abolished, but I am willing to have all contractors licensed. Sardari recruiting is becoming more and more unsuccessful. I think that the present sardari system is not satisfactory. I object to the Section 90 sardari coolies having to wait three days in the depôt. I should much prefer the garden manager to make the report required by the concluding portion of clause (*f*) of Section 90, after the coolies' arrival on the garden. I have so many sardars that I am not much troubled by clause (*g*) of Section 90. I have had no complaints about interference with emigrants on the journey up. A sardar gets R15 for each coolie he brings up and R6 on starting; he draws no pay while away. If he has drawn an advance and got no coolies he is liable to refund the advance, and a portion is recovered according to circumstances. I would be willing to reduce the Act VI initial contract to three years.

We have given out rice land and have been clearing forest land to give to coolies on gardens where labour is difficult to keep. On most of the gardens we have plenty of land to give; this binds the coolie to the garden more than anything. It is likely to come about that a garden which cannot give land will have to give a higher wage to make things equal. Forty *nals* light hoe is our *nirikh* here. I believe in encouraging coolies going to their homes on leave. The railway gives special coolie rates and the forwarding agents look after them on the journey. Gardens which are not under agreement with the Steamer Companies use the railway. I think coolies prefer travelling by railway. I should be willing to bring up coolies on a promise of repatriation if I got them more cheaply than at present. Our annual wastage of labour is 5 or 6 per cent.

I should like the distinction between bonus and advance in Act XIII abolished. Our bonus is R12 and R6. I suffer from enticement, but the gardens which entice labour are mostly situated in the jungle and it is difficult to visit them to recover absconders. I think that something might be done to remedy the evil by making any one employing a coolie imported by another man liable for some portion of the cost of importation.

I do not think that a Central Recruiting Agency is workable.

If you do away with the right of private arrest you might as well do away with Act VI at once. I consider that Sections 195 and 196 will have to be withdrawn in the next four

Sibsagar.

or five years, but I think that we should have notice. Conditions are being yearly relaxed in Assam; not long ago if a coolie went to live in the basti, the garden would make it a point of not employing him.

There are some gardens in this district which give R6 and R5 pay *plus* a bonus. It is possible that with a rise of Act VI wage, the coolie might draw it without upsetting the rest of the labour force, if the excess were paid as a bonus at the beginning of the year. An arrangement like this is made in some gardens where the fourth year Act VI wage is higher than the garden wage.

Our loss on rice last year was not more than R1,000. We import rice for new coolies because the Assam rice does not suit them. Most of the coolies make their own arrangements for *dhan*. The withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley will presumably injure us, as the emigrant will possibly prefer to go to a place where labour is free.

No. 195.—Mr. J. M. Wood, *Manager, Madoarie Tea Estate, Sibsagar.*

I have 450 acres under tea with a labour force of about 400. I can get about 20 coolies a day from the bastis except during the *dhan*-planting season. I have two Act VI coolies, the rest are under Act XIII. The bonus I pay is R12 and R10. I send down sardars yearly; I did fairly well last year, but indifferently this year. This year 17 sardars got 23 coolies. I object to the abolition of the right of private arrest because I may at any time have to resort to Act VI, although Act XIII is the custom of the factory. I have only recently joined. The newly arrived coolie is put under an Act XIII contract for three years. I am satisfied with Act XIII as worked. I have about 100 acres of rice land, and any coolie who wants it can rent a plot. I think that all contractors should be licensed.

My sardars get R15 a head for each coolie brought up; they draw no pay. Advances are deducted from the R15, or are recovered if the sardar brings up no coolie and also excess advances above R15 a head. I think that it would be good policy to give coolies who deserved it, a return ticket to their country for a holiday. I think that something might be done by bringing up coolies on a promise of repatriation after three years.

No. 196.—Mr. T. H. Hall, *Manager, Borsillah Tea Estate, Jhansi Tea Association, Sibsagar.*

I have 918 acres under tea, with a labour force of 1,111 working people. This is barely sufficient in the plucking season, and I require about another 200 coolies. I sent down 25 sardars to recruit this year. Up to date only 17 souls have been brought up, but 10 sardars have not returned as yet. I attribute the poor results to the fact that I have not imported any contractors' coolies for some years, and that the old coolies on my garden have lost touch with their homes. I give the sardars all expenses as well as three months' full pay, and a bonus of R10 per recruit. I do not make any deductions on account of advances. I have been recruiting under Section 90 where applicable and under Chapter IV elsewhere. The results under each seem to be about the same. I should like Section 90 extended throughout the recruiting districts. Section 90 coolies are put under local Act VI agreements for three years.

I renew under Act XIII, paying a bonus of R12 and R6. My wages are R5 and R4. I use local Act VI agreements for people living outside the lines in the villages. Act XIII, as it stands, is quite sufficient for old coolies living in the lines. No agreement will retain an old coolie who wishes to leave. I should not be prepared to do without local Act VI agreements, unless honorary magistrates were appointed with power to issue warrants, and Act XIII amended so that a conviction under it would not operate as a release. Warrants should be given to the manager or his chaukidars for execution.

If Sections 195 and 196 were withdrawn, the whole Act might as well go too. I have not arrested more than four or five coolies under these sections in the last half a dozen years. The few absconders I have had were principally contractors' coolies. Sardari coolies seldom abscond. The moral effect of these sections, especially on the villagers who have given agreements, is considerable.

If considered necessary, I should not object to the reduction of the term of the initial Act contract, but it should not be less than three years. If the cost of recruiting were reduced, I should be quite prepared to offer repatriation to coolies on the expiry of their contracts.

We could hardly afford a rise of pay, unless coolies cost us less. I should favour the statement of the coolie's pay as a daily wage, and publishing in the vernacular in the recruiting districts the advantages which my garden has to offer.

I have given out about 40 acres of rice land to my coolies at a nominal rental. That is about all I have got. If the Government will contribute to the cost of importing our coolies, it would be a good thing if labourers were imported with the offer of Government land on easy terms after four years' service on a tea garden. All contractors should be licensed. I think that they could not be abolished.

No. 197.—Dr. J. R. MacNamara, *Medical Officer, Nazira, Sibsagar.* **Sibsagar.**

I have been 12 years in Jorhat and Sibsagar. I think that the country has become distinctly healthier during that period. All coolies need acclimatizing, and some take quite two years. When I first came to the district the sardari coolies were of much finer physique than the contractors' coolies, but they have since deteriorated and now there is not much to choose between the two.

The amount of abortion on some gardens is appalling; on some gardens 65 per cent. of pregnant women do not give birth to living children. I have no doubt that it is often intentionally caused. The motive usually is that a woman does not want her earnings interfered with. Infant mortality is not specially high. Our custom here is to give two months' leave after child-birth. I do not think it necessary to extend this in the rains; heat is worse than rain for infants, as it brings on convulsions. The birth-rate varies on different gardens, and is highest on healthy gardens.

I do not think that home-sickness affects the health of the newly imported labourer. The free grant of leave is good for the coolies' health. I have seen some coolies who do not do well here—Gaya Bhuiyas for instance. I have not had much experience of North-West labour up here. The Ganjami does fairly well. Four to five per cent. is a good birth-rate taken on the working population. You seldom see large families among coolies. I think that the offer of a bonus for births might have a good effect. Numbers of new coolies arrive with syphilis; I think that coolies suffering from primary syphilis should be rejected. I have known gardens in which a high death-rate was due to a general syphilitic taint. The hotel system is worked on unhealthy gardens and on gardens importing much labour.

No. 198.—Mr. C. W. Simkins, *Manager, Amguri Tea Estate, Sibsagar.*

I have 2,500 acres under tea, with a labour force of approximately 3,200 working coolies. This force is not sufficient for my requirements. I could do with another 500 coolies, in order that I might be able to grant leave more freely. I sent down about 70 sardars this season to recruit. They have altogether obtained about 200 coolies, and 50 of them have not returned as yet. The results were best in the Rewa State. My sardars receive a bonus of R10 per recruit. They draw no pay, and it is only in exceptional cases that the advances made to them are recovered. We tried this year giving R10 to intending emigrants, in order that they might clear off their debts. The sardars who made such payments have been fairly successful, but a number of coolies who had taken the bonus bolted from the depôt.

The coolies recruited from Native States came up free, the others under contract under Act VI. I have not used Section 90. The Native States coolies are not put on contract after their arrival on the garden. They are family people, and are quite settled. I would give them an Act XIII contract after the third year on the garden. They receive the same pay as other coolies. Last year the recruiting results were so bad that the cost of sardari recruits averaged over R100 per head. This year the cost should not exceed R70. I generally renew contracts under Act XIII, but troublesome coolies are given one-year agreements under Act VI. I pay a bonus of R12 and R6 on renewal, and the pay is R5 and R4.

Act XIII alone would not satisfy our requirements, because it has no sections corresponding to Sections 195 and 196, which are necessary in the case of new coolies, especially contractors' coolies, and very occasionally sardari coolies. I would not, therefore, like to see Sections 195 and 196 withdrawn. If an old coolie wants to leave, he will do so. It is impossible to keep him, though gardens situated in the jungle might be able to chaukidar him more successfully than a garden surrounded by villages. I very seldom use Sections 195 and 196 myself, as we have had no contractors' coolies for several years, but we may have to import them in the future, if our sardars are not successful. If Sections 195 and 196 are withdrawn, honorary magistrates should be appointed to issue warrants or some other steps taken to expedite their issue.

I do not think that we can do without contractors, but they ought all to be licensed. I should like to see a Government official deputed to look after recruiting. I should also like to see a system established in which Government and the gardens should share the cost of importing labourers, who, after serving a term of years on a tea garden, would receive Government land on easy terms.

I am of opinion that the abolition of Act VI in the Surma Valley will be liable to prejudicially affect our recruiting, as gardens in that Valley will be subjected to no restrictions, and their contractors might take our sardari coolies. If, however, contractors for the Surma Valley are controlled, I do not think that we shall suffer harm from the Surma Valley being free.

If we could get our coolies for less, I should be content to see the term of the initial Act contract reduced. I should have no objection to the abolition of local Act VI contracts.

We could not afford to raise wages, unless the supply of coolies is increased, and the cost of importation decreased.

Sibsagar.

I consider that it would be an excellent thing if the pay were stated in terms of a daily instead of a monthly wage. I should also be inclined to pay weekly instead of monthly. New coolies are given their cooking utensils, and an advance of pay weekly equivalent to their full pay. This advance is not recovered till they can afford to repay it, and then only in small instalments. I think it would be a good thing to give new coolies a small bonus to start them.

I consider that it would be an excellent idea for managers to furnish sardars with leaflets in the vernacular showing what advantages their gardens offer.

I grant casual leave as freely as possible. I allow women as much leave as they require before and after child-birth, up to six months. We give half-pay for two months. My birth-rate is fairly satisfactory. It generally exceeds the death-rate. If coolies are contented, there is little abortion.

If the cost of importation were reduced, I would be willing to try to bring up people with the promise of repatriation. I would willingly give selected coolies a return ticket to visit their homes for some months in the cold weather.

I should like to see Section 90 extended to those districts in which it is not now in force. It would be an advantage if the detention for three days of coolies recruited under this section were abolished, and the manager of the garden required to submit a list of Section 90 coolies to the magistrate of the labour district after their arrival on the garden.

My tasks are 30 *nals* for light hoeing and 15 for deep, and over-time is paid at the rate of 3 annas for 25 *nals* light hoeing.

12TH MAY 1906.

(MR. ROBERTSON *present.*)

No. 199.—MR. H. D. ROSSITER, *Manager, Luckwah Tea Estate, Sibsagar.*

I have 1,200 acres under tea with a labour force of about 1,600 coolies. I employ from 80 to 100 Cacharis as well, and about 150 villagers. I could do with more imported coolies. I sent down 50 sardars this year to recruit; 34 of them have returned with 22 working adults. They were obtained mostly from Orissa, and will probably cost from R45 to R53 per head landed on the garden. If a sardar brings up one coolie he gets R5, for two coolies he receives R10 each, and for three or more R15 each. This is not included in the figures previously quoted. The sardars receive no pay, but advances made to them are not recovered, unless they have been giving trouble. When starting out from the garden to recruit, the sardar generally gets a private advance of R10, which is recovered. There are three gardens under me, I find it more difficult to recruit for one than for the other two. I attribute this to the fact that the former is surrounded by a forest reserve and that no *dhan* land is available for the coolies to cultivate. I have never used Section 90 for recruiting.

I got up about 108 contractors' coolies last year. Some came up free and some under the Act. Those who came up free are put under Act agreements on arrival. The same applies to sardari recruits. I have 72 of the 108 coolies left now. Some of them deserted before their arrival on the garden. They cost me originally about R130 a head. I do not see how we can do without contractors at present.

I renew under Act VI, giving from one to three years' contracts. A man gets R10 and a woman R8 for a year's agreement. The wages are R6 and R5, respectively. I am only acting in my present appointment during the absence on leave of the manager, so cannot say why contracts are renewed under Act VI instead of Act XIII. I have never used the latter Act. I do not, however, see why local Act VI agreements should not be done away with.

I would be opposed to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196, but if honorary magistrates were appointed with power to issue warrants, I think that these sections might go.

I would be prepared to see the term of the initial Act VI contract reduced to two years.

Several of my old coolies who are settled in the bastis have gone down to their country this year. They asked me if they might bring back coolies if they got them, and I said they might. I only gave them leave chits. I consider that the more freely people visit their relatives in the recruiting districts the better, and I have been working to attain this for some time. I should be glad to give selected coolies return tickets in order that they might visit their homes. I am using the credit note system introduced by the Assam-Bengal Railway, and find it very convenient.

We raised our pay 12 or 15 years ago. If the term of contract were maintained at four years, I would be content to see the initial Act wage raised to R6. I see no objection to the pay being stated as a daily instead of a monthly wage.

Ordinarily there is not much loss on rice, but this year it will be considerable.

I would not favour the offer of repatriation to intending emigrants.

I have given out 250 or 300 acres of rice land to my coolies. Any one who wants land can get a plot. I instruct my sardars to inform the people in the recruiting districts that land is given to coolies.

My tasks are 30 to 40 *nals* for light hoeing, and eight seers for leaf. I pay 1½ pice for each seer in excess of eight. **Sibsagar.**

No. 200.—Mr. G. Chamney, *Manager, Suffry Tea Estate, Sibsagar.*

My Company has about 3,500 acres of tea, with a labour force of 1¼ coolies per acre. Almost all our labour is under Act VI. I should not object to the abolition of local Act VI contracts. Our bonus on renewal is R10 for men and R6 for women.

I should object to the abolition of the right of private arrest. It has a very wholesome moral effect. If it be a fact that this power has a bad effect on recruiting, I should be prepared to forego it, provided that facilities for arrest by warrant were given, and also that there were some guarantee that we would recover the cost of importing the coolie; but it is more the coolie we want than his cost.

We pay our sardars R10 a head on the coolies recruited. They get no pay. We do not in fact recover advances, though in theory unsuccessful sardars are liable to refund. One of the gardens belonging to this Company has to take contractors' coolies every year. This is a garden which is short of labour. Sardari recruiting has been unsuccessful in the past on this garden. We give out rice land; practically any coolie who wants it can get it. If they clear land, they get it free for three years.

I am not in favour of reducing the term of initial contract, because I do not think that reduction to three years would do much good, while, if it were only two years, we should not obtain a return for our money. I should be prepared to promise repatriation after seven years, in order to attract labour. I would let my coolies go down on leave to their country freely.

No. 201.—Mr. L. G. Ilbert, *Manager, Moran Tea Company, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur.* **Lakhimpur.**

I have been for 26 years in tea in Assam. I have 1,400 acres under tea with a permanent labour force of about 1⅛ coolies per acre. I recruit yearly through contractors and sardars. I sent down 45 sardars this year to Ganjam, the Central Provinces, the Santal Pergannas and Midnapur. Some have not yet returned; those who have, have brought up about 1¼ coolies per sardar. Each coolie costs from R50 to R70, excluding a bonus of R10 per head to the sardar if he brings more than one coolie. Sometimes R15 is given, if the advances have been small, and the coolies are satisfactory. The sardar receives no pay while in the recruiting district. A sardar who comes back empty is liable to have his advances recovered, but ordinarily I write them off. My sardars have been doing better for the last two years. I have no suggestions to offer for improving sardari recruiting. I have not used Section 90. All my sardars go to a local agent, who gives them advances. I think that the supervision of a local agent is necessary, as sardars could hardly manage without some one to look after them.

I have got contractors' coolies from Khargpur, Jubbulpore and Ganjam. I do not think the contractor gives us satisfactory coolies, but one cannot get on without him. I should like to see him gradually done away with, and it may be possible to do so before long, as the country gets more opened out by means of imported labour. At present I think the contractor cannot be given up, but I should have him licensed everywhere.

I pay the Act wage. I renew agreements under Act XIII, paying a bonus of R9 to men and R6 to women. The wage under the renewal is R6 and R5, the bonus not being recovered.

I wish to retain Act VI agreements for newly imported labourers, both contractors' and sardari. I should be prepared to see the term of contract reduced to three years. It might be worth consideration to confine Act VI agreements to contractors' coolies, but I am not certain whether we are far enough advanced to have only Act XIII for sardari coolies. I am decidedly opposed to the abolition of Sections 195 and 196. If these go, the whole Act may go. I have hardly ever exercised the right of private arrest myself, but the moral effect of the right is great, and cannot be dispensed with. I am well situated as I am surrounded by villages, and my coolies do not want to run away. It is because Act XIII has no provision for summary arrest that I consider it defective, as applied to new labourers. By the time a warrant can be got, a coolie may be a hundred miles away. If Sections 195 and 196 are withdrawn, I consider it absolutely necessary that there should be a magistrate within easy reach, who could issue a warrant. I think that if Act XIII were the law for the control of labour, a section would be required against enticement. Otherwise, I think the Act would work well enough.

I put coolies who come up not under contract, under Section 492, Indian Penal Code agreements, as I am a long way from a magistrate, and the number of such coolies is very small. I should have no objection to seeing local contracts abolished.

I have very little rice land, and there is very little land in my neighbourhood which I can take up. I should be prepared to see the wage stated in terms of a daily wage instead of monthly. As an employer, I could also give a stipulation that for a certain portion of the year, say six months, the labourer could earn up to double the wage for extra work. I should be prepared to allow selected labourers to visit their country in the off season; I think it would do good, as it would keep the emigrants in touch with their homes. I should not be in favour of offering coolies repatriation on the expiry of their term of contract. It would mean that the coolie would probably be got hold of by some one else, and what we want is to see people

Lakhimpur. settle down here. I do not think that any system of giving the coolie a lump sum as deferred pay, graduated according to the number of days he has worked, would be of any good. I hardly think the coolie would understand it or appreciate it. Generally speaking, the coolie on a tea garden attends regularly. What can make Assam attractive is to let the down-country people know the chance there is for an emigrant to settle here, and that can be done by encouraging well-to-do people to re-visit their country and tell their friends their experiences.

I pay a woman who has a child her haziri for three months; sometimes the sick haziri is paid, but frequently the full haziri is given. A woman is never pushed to work at this time.

No. 202.—Mr. A. D. Macfarlane, *Manager, Borbam Tea Estate, Lakhimpur.*

I have 466 acres under tea, and a labour force of 1·2 coolies per acre. I get any amount of basti labour besides. I recruit every year through sardars. I do not take contractors' coolies. I sent down six sardars to Hazaribagh this year. Three of them have returned with 24 souls. My sardari coolies cost me about R60 a head to import. I do not pay the sardars any bonus. They receive no pay for the time they are down, but the advances made to them are not recovered. I have about as much labour as I want. Sardari coolies are brought up under contract under Act VI. I do not know anything about Section 90, as I have not recruited under it.

I renew agreements under Act XIII, paying a bonus of R10 for men and R8 for women. The wages are R6-8 and R5, respectively. The bonus is not recovered. Act XIII suits my requirements, and I have no amendments to suggest. I would agree to the abolition of local Act VI contracts.

Though I have never used Sections 195 and 196, I think that it is necessary to retain them, as they give security for our money. If they were withdrawn, I do not think coolies would abscond. I am of opinion that the appointment of honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants would provide a satisfactory substitute for Sections 195 and 196.

I do not think that we could afford to raise the pay. I am disposed to favour the statement of the pay in terms of a daily instead of a monthly wage.

My coolies can get as much rice land rent-free as they wish to take up. I have given out about 20 acres to my coolies. I am prepared to offer land to people in the recruiting districts as an attraction to emigrate. I am not in favour of Government offering land to would-be emigrants after a period of service on a tea garden in order to attract them to the Province.

My task for light hoeing is 30 *nals*, and my plucking task is 8 seers, with 2 pice a seer above that quantity.

I would be prepared to offer repatriation after six years' service in order to attract emigrants. My experience is that Santals generally do clear out to the villages and settle down on land of their own after six years. They prefer to be on Government to garden land.

I should like to see contractors abolished altogether. We would get on far better without them. If contractors are retained, I would favour their being controlled by a Central Agency, if it could be managed.

I would be willing to reduce the term of the initial Act contract to three years.

I am doing away with what barrack lines I have got. The coolies do not like them.

MARGHERITA, 14th May 1906.

No. 203.—Mr. D. J. Mackintosh, *Manager, Makum Tea Estate, Margherita, Lakhimpur.*

I have 1,863 acres under tea, with a working labour force of 2,750. I employ about 250 villagers as well. My labour force is sufficient for my requirements, but I have to recruit every year to make good wastage. I hope eventually to obtain a force of two coolies per acre. I shall then only need to import about 150 coolies a year to make good wastage. During the last three years, I recruited over 1,200 souls entirely through sardars, with the exception of 82 persons obtained through contractors. I got most of my people from the East Coast, Chota Nagpur and the Santal Pergannas. Labourers obtained from Vizagapatam have been satisfactory. Practically, all the sardari coolies are brought up free. Last year I put new recruits under three-year agreements under Act VI. I am not quite sure what I shall do this year. I pay my sardars R30 for each Act coolie, deducting therefrom the advances made to the sardars. I also pay the travelling expenses, etc., of the sardar and the coolies. As a matter of fact if the sardar receives more in advances than he earns in bonuses, I do not recover the excess. I have not used Section 90. Last year my sardari recruits cost me about R80 a head including the bonus to the sardar. Out of 160 sardars sent down last year, 50 to 60 came back empty-handed. I find that the results under Section 92 are ever so much better than those under Chapter IV.

The contractors' coolies I obtained cost landed on the garden about R150 or R160 a head. They were mostly from the Calcutta depôt and comprised several professional bolters. Personally, I should like to see the contractor's system abolished, as I could get on

without it, but if contractors are retained they should be licensed and kept under strict control. I consider it absolutely disgraceful the way that contractors' coolies have been sent up here in the past. Misrepresentation has been very rife, and the result has been that the deluded coolies frequently either desert or throw up the sponge and die.

Since last year I have used Act XIII almost entirely for renewal of agreements. I give a bonus of R12 to men and R10 to women, and the wages are R6 and R5, respectively. I should prefer to retain the power of putting new arrivals under Act VI contracts locally, but I am prepared to see the Act VI contract abolished as regards renewals.

I treat all coolies on my estate in exactly the same way, and those who are under Act XIII contracts or free, are given the same concessions as regards pay, rice, etc., as Act VI coolies. This I do in my own interests, as coolies must be kept fit and contented, else they will not stay.

As it stands, Act XIII is inconvenient, as the recovery of advances entails a great deal of trouble. I should like to see the bonus legalised. At present I have to show my pay as R7 and R6 and to recover the bonus. To facilitate the arrest of Act XIII absconders, I should like to see warrants granted by telegraph. I am of opinion that the appointment of honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants would be a help.

So far as I am concerned, if Sections 195 and 196 are withdrawn, the whole of Act VI might as well go. I very seldom use these sections, but they are the only penal provisions of Act VI that I am at all likely to make use of, and I should like to retain them for their moral effect on the labour force.

I would be prepared to see the initial Act VI contract reduced to three years provided the cost of importation is reduced accordingly. I find that the coolies whom I brought up free and put under a three years' contract here, came considerably cheaper than those imported under a four years' contract.

I pay higher wages here than are customary lower down the Valley to compensate for the remote position of my garden and the higher local prices. In the present state of the tea industry, I am afraid I could not give a higher wage. From June till the end of October my coolies can earn ticca. I should be prepared to enter into a stipulation with the coolie at the time of recruitment that I would give him extra pay for extra work performed from June to October. I should be in favour of the statement of the wage as a daily instead of a monthly one. I pay local village labourers 4 annas a day, exclusive of ticca. They generally make 8 annas a day by working overtime.

On the whole, I do not consider that an offer of repatriation at the expiry of the contract would have much effect. The time-expired coolie prefers to settle down here. I have no doubt that such an offer would tend to inspire confidence in the recruiting districts, but I am afraid we could not afford it.

I do not think that the offer of deferred pay, graduated according to the number of days he has worked, would be appreciated by the ordinary coolie. He likes to have his holiday when he wants it, and it would not be an inducement to him to forego his leave.

If the railway companies give special cheap return tickets, I would be quite willing to let my coolies go down to their country on leave in the cold weather, and even to pay the fares of a few selected coolies.

I have given out about 150 acres of rice-land to my coolies, and am giving out as much more as I can. I have not hitherto offered land to intending emigrants in the recruiting districts.

I should be prepared to support legislation in the direction of establishing a Central Recruiting Agency under the Tea Association, provided it could be worked satisfactorily.

I believe that a good many coolie women procure abortions. I some time ago warned my coolies that any case of abortion coming to light would be reported to the police. This has had a most excellent effect, and births have greatly increased in the last year. I give three to five months' pregnant leave. A well-to-do woman gets half pay during this time, but a new woman gets full pay for the whole of the period. I supply feeding bottles and milk freely.

No. 204.—Mr. G. E. Harris, *Manager, Assam Railways and Trading Company's Collieries, Margherita, Lakhimpur.*

We import our labour under contract. We have a force of about 3,800. The labourers come from the Central Provinces, Chota Nagpur and Bengal. Those who come up under Act VI are under a one-year contract, and the intial wage is R8 or R7 for a man and R6 for a woman. I take an initial contract for one year, because after eight or nine months I find out what a man is worth to me. If he turns out well, I take an Act XIII contract for three years after nine months; if a man turns out useless, I repatriate him or let him go. The bonus for the three-year contract is R10 for men and women *plus* an advance of R10; women's wages are raised R1 and the men's, as a rule, R2. If a man renews again, he gets a bonus of R15 and an advance of R15, with a further increase of pay according to qualifications. The women get R10 bonus and R10 advance and a rise of wages to R8 a month. About 77½ per cent. take the three years Act XIII contract. I have fixed these wages, because I think that they are fair to the coolie and necessary to retain labour.

Lakhimpur. I should not object to a provision in Act VI empowering Government after enquiry to fix a special minimum wage for special industries.

No coolie for the first 12 months works more than five days in the week; but he is paid for six days' work, and is very liberally treated as regards the work exacted.

I have never used the private arrest sections; if a coolie has made up his mind to bolt, he would be no good to me. I am therefore personally not opposed to the abolition of Sections 195 and 196. Personally, I have no objection to the repeal of the whole Act. As I give advances I find Act XIII works quite well, and I do not wish it amended. I have tried sardari recruiting but it was a failure, and it does not suit me, as there is no slack season on the mines.

We supply non-Act coolies with rice at R4 a maund up to their monthly requirements; many prefer to buy in the bazaar.

The hours of work are 8 A. M. to 4 P. M.—from leaving the surface to return to surface. The coolies take a meal down with them, which they eat when they like.

For the last two years we have got a sufficient supply of labour; the coolies cost about R150 a head. We systematically repatriate coolies whose health gives way; in 1905 we sent back about 130 coolies, mostly men. I tried to settle my coolies on land, but they found that they were earning such high wages that it was not worth their while to take up cultivation.

I find that family coolies prefer living in single houses, but sometimes a group of the same caste are contented in barracks. I have never had a case in court under Act XIII. If a coolie is discontented, it is best to let him go. I have 300 to 400 labourers working regularly without any agreement at all. They do not attend so regularly as men under contract. I am trying to introduce the free labour system as much as possible, but it will take a long time.

No. 205.—MR. J. HERON, *Manager, Powai Tea Estate, Lakhimpur.*

I have been twelve years in Assam and three years on my present garden. I have a labour force of 2,000 people for 1,600 acres. I have to recruit regularly every year. I use sardars almost entirely. I have had only 12 contractors' coolies, and that was three years ago. I am of opinion that Assam could get on without the contractor. Powai is a comparatively new garden, yet we manage to get on with sardari recruitment.

I recruit from Singhbhum and Midnapur. The Singhbhum people all come up under Act VI; the Midnapur coolies are free. The latter are all put under Act XIII contracts; they give a three years' agreement, receiving an annual bonus of R12 and R10. I pay R5 and R4 as wages for these three years. After that the coolies get R6 and R5 if they take new agreements, and they receive the same annual bonus. Coolies who have come up under Act VI are put under Act XIII if they renew. No written agreement is taken from them; they are merely given an advance. They are put on the same footing as the others, the advance being treated as bonus. The Act VI coolies are worse off for the three years they first come up by R24 and R18. If I could get the Singhbhum coolie up free, I would give him the same advantages as the Midnapur coolie. What I want to encourage is people coming here as free labourers.

If Act VI were wiped out, I do not think it would make any difference to me. I have no trouble with the coolies I get up free and who are put under Act XIII agreements. They work very steadily. Act XIII serves my purpose quite well. I cannot, of course, under it catch a coolie who absconds, but I have never had any of the Midnapur coolies try to run away. If they did, I should be in a difficulty, but so far I have been successful in keeping them.

Last year, including the commission paid to the sardar at R10 per head, my coolies cost me R69 each. The sardar gets no pay while in his country. He gets R5 when he goes down, which is not recovered. I include this in the R69.

All coolies, whether under Act XIII or Act VI, get rice at R3 per maund. I consider that the coolie lives very comfortably on what he earns. A man on R6 draws, if he works regularly, R4-3 as cash pay, after deducting the price of 24 seers of rice, and he has had his bonus of R12 per annum in addition to this. As my labour force is a full one and thoroughly efficient, there is not much opportunity for a man to earn ticca. A good man can do his task easily in four* hours, and that is the average time worked per day.

From June to October a woman can earn ticca by extra plucking. She has to pluck six seers, this an ordinary woman can do in about four hours quite easily. Thereafter she gets two pice per seer for extra plucking. In one month, last year, I paid R2,813 as ticca pay to 706 women and children, amounting to nearly R4 per head over my whole force. Many of the women, of course, earned double this, while others earned little as they worked less. That was the best month, but in the rest of the plucking season, substantial amounts were paid as ticca.

* On the morning of the 15th May the Committee visited Powai, and saw numbers of coolies returning from work after completing their tasks at 9-30 A.M.

I have a satisfactory birth-rate. The *junglis* in particular are prolific on my garden. I give from five to six months' leave to a pregnant woman on half pay, and more if the woman requires it. **Lakhimpur.**

I am giving out land to my labourers ; I have some 300 acres under cultivation. Waste land is cleared for the coolies at the garden expense ; it is heavy forest land, which requires a lot of clearing. At the last Government enumeration of live-stock, the return showed that the coolies possessed over 260 head of cattle and 150 goats.

I allow the coolies to live anywhere outside the lines they like. They build their own houses, and I supply all the materials and pay them for a reasonable time while doing it. They consider this a great privilege. They can make a small vegetable garden round their huts, and this has been a very great success. I make no difference in this matter between coolies who are under agreement and coolies who are not. I have some 300 or 400 coolies who are under no agreement whatever and have received no bonus. The latter work practically as regularly as the others.

I think the policy to pursue is to spend money on the coolie up here and save money in the recruiting districts. I do not mean that money alone will keep the coolie. But if he receives small privileges and thinks he is well treated, he will never give you any trouble.

DIGBOI, 15TH MAY 1906.

No. 206.—MR. A. B. HAWKINS, *General Manager, Assam Oil Company, Digboi, Lakhimpur.*

Before taking up my present appointment I was in charge of the labour of the Assam Railways and Trading Company for five years from 1897 to 1902. During that period I spent about 6 months of the year in the recruiting districts, mainly in the Central Provinces and Chota Nagpur. I obtained labourers through contractors entirely. The coolies were selected out of their general batches, and were not necessarily recruited expressly for the Company. My chief objection to the contractor system was that the contractors recruited for Assam as a whole and not for individual concerns, the result being that they were independent of all control and masters of the situation, and unless we took the bad with the good, they used to refuse to supply us. Had the contractor been in the position of an employé of one or more individual concerns, the latter would have been able to exercise more complete control over his actions than could ever be provided by the law. I should like to see the professional recruiter required to spend the slack season of each year on the gardens employing him, mixing with the coolies whom he has supplied, and keeping thoroughly in touch with them. Under this system the interest of the professional recruiter in the welfare of the coolies recruited by him would be continued after their arrival on the estate—in fact he would be in charge of the recruiting department of the particular gardens employing him. It would also practically bring the contractor system into line with the sardari system. The professional recruiter would select the sardars and the two systems would be blended. The contractor system as at present worked is full of abuses, and should not be tolerated any longer, but I consider that there is a nucleus among the professional recruiters who would be very useful to Assam, working under the conditions I have indicated. I would not be in favour of a Central Recruiting Agency, because I hold the view that recruitment should necessarily be done for individual estates, thereby giving estates the full benefit of any special attractions which they can offer. Under a Central Agency which contemplated pooling the coolies, the effect would be to make gardens offering superior advantages to the coolie, suffer for those which did not offer such attractions. I consider that any scheme which would entirely eliminate the contractor in favour of the garden sardar would be open to the objection that it would not provide for the supply of labour to new concerns.

By the scheme that I have suggested it would be necessary for the employer to interest himself in the recruitment of his labour, and this would have a far greater effect in controlling abuses than any rules of Government. I consider that it would be a great misfortune if the services of the professional recruiter were lost to Assam. He knows the business thoroughly and Assam cannot afford to dispense with his services.

I know that Assam has a very bad name in the recruiting districts, and I consider that the chief cause of this is the Act. Special legislation was in my opinion necessary at the beginning, but I think the time has come for consideration whether Assam would not be in a better position without any special labour legislation. Personally, I consider that the Act should be done away with, and I do not think that Assam will find a way out of its difficulties till this is done. I look on the Act as an unnatural check on the laws of supply and demand, and I would have it repealed both in the recruiting and in the labour districts.

I consider that increased facilities of communication have put an entirely new complexion on the whole matter. The movement of the Railway Companies towards providing cheap through tickets has made an inflow of labour from the recruiting to the labour districts practicable at such a nominal figure, that the necessity for a penal enactment to retain the labourer is no longer a burning question. The same facilities of communication, make it easy for an unwilling coolie to return to his country. When the free system is thoroughly inaugurated, I see no reason why a coolie should not be imported into Assam at rates

Lakhimpur. proportionately not much in excess of those paid in the Duars, nor why some such system of recruitment as that in force in the Duars should not be adopted.

If Act VI is retained for tea-gardens, I would urge that the Assam mines and such like industries should be exempted from its operation. In 1904 we asked to be allowed to import skilled miners on R15 per mensem from Chota Nagpur. The fact that we hoped to import such persons for the cost of their railway fares and *khoraki* enabled us to offer such liberal wages. The Commissioner of the Division, however, pointed out that the Act stood in the way of our doing this. It is needless to say that a skilled miner would not submit to an Act VI contract or to registration. The consequence is that we have now to import the same class of contractors' coolies as are recruited for tea-gardens. We cannot attempt the sardari system of recruitment owing to the fact that we never have a slack season and could never afford to send away sufficient people to make it feasible. The people are brought up on a one-year agreement at a high cost. At the expiry of one year those coolies who do not take to mining have to be repatriated. This so forces up the cost of labour that we are prevented from offering sufficient wages to attract skilled miners. In any case I consider that persons imported on a minimum wage of R12 for a man and R8 for a woman should be exempted from the provisions of the Act.

At Digboi we employ from 900 to 1,400 people. The ordinary coolie is paid R12, women receive R8. We do not recruit at all. The labour force is comprised of time-expired imported coolies who have settled in the district, Assamese and Punjabis. There is nobody here under agreement. The fares of Punjabis who work well and who wish to visit their homes are paid, and they generally return with some of their friends. We used to import from 100 to 150 coolies per annum under Act VI, but we do not find that necessary now. The work is very popular because we pay good wages and the people can come and go as they like. We pay as nearly as possible on the 15th of the succeeding month and except in the case of small sums to new arrivals, we give no advances. The first "week end" after pay-day some hundreds of our people visit the neighbouring bazaars, and to encourage this, I have a special arrangement with the Railway Company which gives them a return ticket for a single fare. Such special tickets are purchased from the Railway by us in quantities and are sold by us to the coolies. The object of this is to be able to withhold the privilege from any individual who does not work fairly regularly. Should any such person want to go away he has to purchase his ticket from the railway station at ordinary rates; though a small thing, we find the privilege ticket greatly sought after.

I consider that the granting of minor magisterial powers to a judicious selection of employers representing circles would be an excellent thing.

I consider that the abolition of the Act in the Surma Valley and its retention in the Brahmaputra Valley will have a most disastrous effect on recruitment for the latter. I am in my own mind firmly convinced that if this Valley agrees now to come into line with the sister Valley, they will find Government more sympathetic and helpful than can reasonably be expected in the near future, when I anticipate their being forced into asking for the abolition of the Act consequent on their disadvantageous position as compared with the other Valley.

Copy of correspondence between the Assam Railways and Trading Company and the Commissioner, Chota Nagpur Division.

Dated 18th February 1904.

From—The Labour Superintendent, Assam Railways and Trading Company, Limited,

To—The Commissioner, Chota Nagpur Division.

I am endeavouring to establish a system of recruitment among skilled coal cutters for my Company's coal mines. Business in the Bengal coal mines being very slack just now, owing to the general depression of the coal trade, it would appear to be a good opportunity to try the experiment. We have been importing coolies under the provisions of Act VI at a monthly wage of R7 and R8; but though this wage has enabled us to hold our own with Tea Gardens importing at a rate of R5 and R6, we have not been able to attract any labour inured to coal mining entailing under-ground work. At the same time, the better wage we have offered has done nothing to reduce the initial cost of importation. As an experiment we now propose to offer a wage of R15 per month for *bonâ fide* experienced coal cutters, and to work these men much under the same system as is in vogue in the Duars; namely give duffadars or sardars charge of 10 to 20 men and pay such commission on work done over and above the R15 payable to the coolies. In order to do this, I would solicit the help of Government as regards facilities to importing such skilled labour into Assam. It must be understood that such a class of man will not dream of signing any contract under Act VI, nor will he submit to any of the registration provisions of the Act. Further, it is not the intention of the Company or their wish to put these men on any kind of agreement, civil or otherwise; but to trust to the wage and other inducements—such as free lodging, medical comforts, etc., which the Company provides for all their labour—to keep them contented when once arrived in Assam. It must also be understood that the Company cannot afford to pay such high wages except on the assumption that the cost of importation will be represented by their actual fares and *khoraki*.

I would therefore ask you to consider the merits of the case, and to let me know whether such skilled labour can be sent up untrammelled by the Act, and in fact be considered on a par with skilled mechanics who are not considered as coming under the definition of "coolies."

I may mention that I am anxious to take up about one hundred of these men as a trial, with a view to increasing the number gradually up to about five hundred.

No. 996-J, dated Ranchi, 23rd February 1904.

From—The Commissioner, Chota Nagpur Division,

To—The Assam Railways and Trading Company.

With reference to your letter of the 18th instant about recruiting skilled miners for Assam in this Division, I have the honor to reply as follows.

2. Looking at the notification which was issued under Section 3 of Act VI of 1901, with reference to this Division and the definition of the word "Emigrate" in the same Act, I am unable to see how your proposal could be carried into operation.

DUM DUMA, 17TH MAY 1906.

No. 207.—MR. C. L. PRINGLE, *Superintendent, Dum Duma Tea Company, Dum Duma, Lakhimpur.*

I superintend the working of four gardens, with 4,865 acres under tea and a labour force of about 8,500 working coolies. The labour force is sufficient for our requirements, but we would like to have more coolies in order to enable us to grant leave more freely. I have been doing a good deal of recruiting both through sardars and contractors. The following statements show the actual cost to the Company of labourers recruited through garden sardars and contractors respectively, during the last three years :—

Statement showing results of sardari recruitment.

Year.	Total number of persons recruited.			Number of sardars.		Amount of expenditure.	Cost per head (adults and working children.)
	Adults and working children.	Others.	Total.	Sent down.	Not returned.		
						R	R
1903 . .	610	144	754	269	23	46,580	76
1904 . .	390	65	455	495	66	44,974	115
1905 . .	685	146	831	528	67	62,949	92

Statement showing results of contractors' recruitment.

Year.	Total number of persons recruited.			Amount of expenditure.	Cost per head (adults and working children.)
	Adults and working children.	Others.	Total.		
1903	None recruited.			R	R
1904	52	5	57	6,197	119
1905	160	14	174	22,278	139

In the expenses of sardari recruitment is included the bonus of from R20 to R35, according to the class of the coolie, paid to sardars per recruit. Advances made to sardars in the recruiting districts are set off against the bonus. Unsuccessful sardars, who are not new coolies, have to refund the advances made to them. Where the amount of the advance only slightly exceeds the bonus earned, the excess is not recovered from successful sardars. Every year a certain number of old coolies, who have been on the gardens for many years, come up and ask for leave to go down to their country to recruit. I always allow them to go, as a matter of policy, though there may be little hope of their getting coolies. I pay their way expenses, but all cash advances and sometimes part of the way expenses are recovered from them on their return. This is the established custom on the gardens, and the coolies understand it. I would urge that sardars should be allowed a freer hand in the recruiting districts than at present, and that Section 90 should be extended to those districts in which it is not in force. I use Section 90 where applicable, but in some of the districts in which it is in force we have only a small connection. Coolies recruited under Chapter IV come up under Act VI contracts as a rule, though some of them are only registered; those recruited under Sections 90 and 92 come up free. Up to last year the latter had to be given Act VI contracts on arrival or after they had been on the garden for some time, but for the last two years we have not put them under any contract. This is being tried as an experiment, and so far has been successful, and I do not think that desertions among these coolies have been more frequent than among those under contract under Act VI. The free coolies receive the same pay and other concessions as Act VI coolies.

Lakhimpur.

I have a private arrangement with a special contractor. We have imported contractor's coolies in larger numbers during the present year, as we are opening out a new area. The coolies received have been satisfactory. The greater number of them have been imported under Section 492, I.P.C., contracts for three years. A few of them have been put under Act VI contract for special reasons, but the bulk are still serving under their original Section 492, I.P.C., contracts. Not many of our contractors' coolies have absconded as yet, and they seem to be settling down very well. I do not consider that we are at present in a position to do without contractors. I think, however, that it would be a good thing if contractors in the open districts in Bengal were kept under control.

During the five seasons preceding the present one, I regularly visited the recruiting districts. I consider that a freer supply of labour would be obtained if the advantages which Assam offers were better known to officials and others in the recruiting districts. In my opinion there is a sufficient supply of surplus labour in the districts from which we recruit to enable us to keep our existing labour force up to its present strength through sardari recruiting, but I do not think that our sardars could recruit sufficient labour to enable us to extend, at any rate unless further aids are given to sardari recruitment. The provision in Section 90 requiring the sardar to have been a resident on the estate for six months is inconvenient, as a newly arrived coolie is often the best recruiter. A man comes up with a sardar, has a look at the country and asks to be sent back to bring up some of his people. Sambalpur Gandas make very good labourers, and I should be prepared to take them readily if the present difficulties in the way of their recruitment were removed. At present our sardars complain that they are hackled by the police. I have within the last couple of years obtained some coolies from Vizagapatam. They work well and on the whole seem as healthy as the other coolies.

I consider that the repeal of the Act in the Surma Valley may do us a certain amount of harm, but not much if Section 90 is further extended. They will have the advantage of working without restrictions, but this will not affect us much, as the two Valleys recruit to great extent in different localities or require a different type of labour.

All our labourers get the Act pay for the first four years whether under contract under the Act or not. On renewal we pay a bonus for each year of R12 for men and R8 for women, and the pay remains at R6 and R5, respectively. We always renew under Act VI. We never give one year Act VI contracts, but the renewed contract is for as long as four years if the coolie is willing to take it. A man who renews a contract for four years gets R48 down, and I think he appreciates this, and is only too willing to renew on these terms.

Sections 195 and 196 are our principal protection for the expenditure we have incurred in importing labour, and if they are done away with the whole Act might as well disappear. We occasionally use these sections, but have not done so to any great extent within the last three or four years.

As a result of discussions initiated by the Assam Administration's Circular No. 15 R. of the 28th March 1905, the Dum Duma Circle of the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association formulated alternative proposals for the control of labour in the event of Sections 195 and 196 being withdrawn. These were : —

(*a*) The retention of Chapter III for the control of recruitment by contractors.

(*b*) Chapter IV regulating sardari recruitment to be done away with, and all sardari recruitment to be governed by Section 90.

(*c*) The retention of the power of private arrest in the case of contractors' coolies, serving under their original indenture.

(*d*) Act VI contracts to be confined only to contractors' coolies serving under their original indenture.

In fact Act VI as it at present stands would only apply to persons newly imported under Chapter III. Besides this we require a local labour law on the lines of Act XIII. The consideration should be the bonus and not an advance as at present, and in the case of newly imported coolies the expenses of importation up to a reasonable amount should be deemed to be the consideration. A conviction should not operate as a release. We also particularly require a stringent provision against enticement. The burden of proof should lie upon the employer with whom the absconding coolie is found, and besides being required to return the coolie he should be subjected to the payment of substantial damages—not less than R100. The contract should be for a maximum of three calendar years. I do not consider any clauses providing for the repatriation of physically unfit or fraudulently recruited coolies are necessary, as the medical examination of emigrants in the recruiting districts will continue, and the proposed Act will apply to the sardari and not to the arkati recruit, the likelihood that the former will be fraudulently recruited being small. So far as I know these proposals have the assent of managers in this district. It is especially important that we should have greater facilities for sardari recruitment and more protection against enticement. I consider that there should be greater facilities for obtaining warrants. Honorary magistrates should be appointed from among planters of standing.

I do not think that a small rise of wages would attract more people, but I would be prepared to raise the initial wage to R6 for men and R5 for women. We supply new coolies with charpoys, *kalsis* and cooking pots, as well as blankets and umbrellas. We could guarantee

overtime pay for five months of each year, and I should be prepared to do so and to give my sardars vernacular leaflets setting forth these and the other advantages that I can offer. Firewood is free and water is laid on in the lines. I should agree to the coolie's wage being stated as a daily instead of a monthly one. I am against raising the task in order to raise the wage. We want good work, and we have fixed the task which enables us to get it. My hoeing task can be performed by an able-bodied man in two or three hours.

I am prepared to see the period of the initial contract reduced to three years.

I am opposed to the suggestion that intending emigrants should be offered repatriation at the expiry of the four years' contract. The great objection to this is that the coolie would in many cases avail himself of the offer, and after spending a few months at home would want to return; he would go to a contractor's depôt to be sent up to Assam, but as likely as not it would not be to my garden, and even if he did come back to my garden, I should have to pay full price for him.

I am quite willing to let coolies go home on leave in the cold weather, and do so now. If the railway fare were reduced, I would be disposed to pay the return fares of selected coolies to and from their country.

I give out rice land to coolies asking for it, and have even cleared such land of jungle in order to settle them on it. I have not tried offering land to would-be emigrants. The offer of Government land to intending emigrants after serving for several years on a tea-garden would be too remote to attract people, but I should have no objection to Government initiating a scheme of direct colonisation at State expense, and I should be prepared to offer such people work on daily pay and to assist in any way.

I do not think that organised recruiting under the Indian Tea Association is practicable. I have never seen a workable scheme put forward. I would, however, like to see a Government officer deputed from Assam to the recruiting districts, to look after the interests of the Province and to set before officials in those districts the true facts regarding Assam.

There has been a marked improvement in the system of working the labourers on tea-gardens. It is now everywhere recognized that one of the chief duties of the manager of a tea-garden is to see that his coolies are contented. The wishes of the coolie are more and more studied, and more attention is paid to learning the languages of the aborigines.

Pregnant women are given anything up to 8 months' leave. The period is left to the discretion of the medical officer. Such women receive the usual subsistence allowance. The health of our gardens has greatly improved of late years. The country is becoming more and more opened up, and we are now successfully employing classes of coolies whom we could not have attempted to employ in former years.

During the past three years we have paid the following amounts as overtime pay between the months of June and October:—

	R
1903	43,600
1904	55,402
1905	59,564

The greater portion of this has been earned by the women, of whom we have some 3,300 in our labour force.

In the same three years we have paid the following amounts as bonus on renewal of agreements:—

	R
1903	59,491
1904	70,886
1905	73,626

My experience, so far as it goes, is that people prefer coming up by rail instead of by river. I have heard this opinion expressed both by old coolies and coolies who had recently come up.

No. 208.—Mr. A. O. Crowe, *Superintendent, Assam Frontier Tea Company, Talap, Lakhimpur.*

I have eight gardens under my charge. The area under tea is 7,500 acres and the labour force about 13,000 adults. I want 1,800 more. The gardens have from 1·40 to 1·70 adult coolies per acre. I aim at having 2 per acre.

Sardari recruiting was very successful up to 1901. From 1902 it has declined. I attribute the decline to loss of connection in the recruiting districts due to want of system in the recruiting.

I renew both under Act VI and Act XIII, and the coolies have exactly the same privileges. The choice is determined partly by the *dastur* of the garden, but generally speaking single coolies and those with no tie to the garden are put under Act VI. The wages are R6 and R5 with a bonus of R12 to both men and women. On one garden the bonus to men is R15. Some of the gardens have given what rice land they could, but others have not trou' led

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about it. A piece of rice land is a substantial addition to a coolie's income and a powerful means of settling him on a tea-garden. It is costing us this year from ₹10,000 to ₹12,000 a month to supply the labour force with rice at ₹3 a maund; in other words we are paying the coolies nearly a rupee a head extra on this account all over our labour force. With two adult coolies an acre a coolie does not work more than 18 or 20 days a month.

For the last three years the wastage has been over 10 per cent. of the force, largely due to coolies going and settling on Government land. This percentage is high, and I think that it is due to the gardens being undermanned. This year I have had to take arkati coolies; next year I hope by more attention to improve my sardari recruiting.

Generally speaking, my opinions about the proposed changes in the law agree with those of Mr. Pringle, but I think that if honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants were appointed in sufficient numbers the arrest question would solve itself, as no coolie can be arrested within five miles of a magistrate's court. I consider that the moral effect on a coolie of arrest on warrant and production before a magistrate is much greater than that of private arrest.

There is no doubt that now-a-days the coolie is much less harassed about turning out to work at fixed hours, about keeping cattle near houses and in other ways than used to be the case. He is humoured as much as possible and everything is done to make him comfortable and contented, and it is to our interest to see that this policy is steadily pursued.

18TH MAY 1906.

No. 209.—MR. A. G. FITZGERALD, *Assistant Manager, Pabbojan Tea Company, Dhoedam, Lakhimpur.*

I have been nearly seven years in Assam. I have been down in the recruiting districts for the past three years, looking after recruitment for my Company and also for the Consolidated Tea and Lands Company. I have been in all the Bengal districts. My operations were confined to sardari recruiting entirely. I have learned the Santali, Mundari and Kharia languages.

In my opinion there is still a considerable field for recruitment in the Chota Nagpur districts and in the Santal Pergannas. I have worked under Section 90. The chief objections to the latter are that when the sardar brings in recruits, they have to wait for three days before they can be sent off, and they can only be forwarded if there is a sardar about to return to Assam who belongs to the same employer. For these reasons I have known sardars prefer to work under Chapter IV. I do not think there was any great difference in the results between recruitment under Chapter IV and under Section 90. A further objection to Section 90 is that a sardar cannot be sent back to the recruiting districts, until he has been six months on the garden. A man who has come up and had a look at Assam and likes the place is frequently very successful in recruiting; he has often left his people behind and is anxious to go down again and bring them up.

Some people object to having to sign a contract; others do not seem to mind, they have made up their minds to go and nothing will deter them. When I was on the Powai Tea Estate which I left 18 months ago, we got a good supply of labourers and they were not put on Act VI contracts. They were given Act XIII agreements for three years. I found no difficulty in keeping my labour force, I had practically no desertions and people sent down as sardars recruited well and brought up satisfactory coolies. I should favour the abolition of all Act VI contracts for sardari recruited labourers. The employer would not have the same hold over his coolies, as if they were under Act VI, but I consider that there would be no difficulty in keeping *bonâ fide* sardari coolies on the garden. If a sardar had bought arkati coolies and brought them up to Assam, they might want to run away, but I think this would not be altogether an objection to the system proposed. It would mean that an employer would be careful to see that his sardars only went in for bringing up their friends and relations who would be prepared to stay on the garden.

If we do without Act VI for sardari labourers, I should advocate being allowed to work free from all control in recruitment through sardars. I should favour a system of the sardar being given a return railway ticket, on the return half of which the names of the emigrants he is taking with him should be endorsed. The names could be filled in by the local agent, and the sardar would then go to the railway station with his coolies without any further trouble. I consider that it will be always necessary to have a local agent in the recruiting districts, as sardars are unable to make their own arrangements there. If a trustworthy local agent is appointed to supervise sardari recruitment, I am sure he would use every endeavour to stop abuses in recruitment. If a local agent is remiss in this respect, a report against him would always receive attention from the employers to whom he is responsible. I think it is an excellent thing that employers should themselves take a direct interest in recruitment by deputing qualified assistants to the recruiting districts in the season to look after their sardars and properly supervise them.

I would have no objection to a modification of Section 90, by which the manager of a garden would report to the magistrate of the recruiting district the names of the sardars he sends down and the names of the coolies they bring up, after their arrival on the garden.

No. 210.—Dr. E. Wells Witham, *Medical Officer, Dum Duma, Lakhimpur.*

I have been in the tea districts since 1891, the first nine years in the Tingrai district and subsequently at Dum Duma. During this time the country has become more healthy, but North-Westers cannot stand it even though they are fed on flour. The *jungli* suffers from fever when he first comes up and possibly from bowel complaints; the latter is due to want of care.

I remember that in 1902 the birth-rate for the gardens of the Dum Duma Company for the first time exceeded the death-rate. The infantile death-rate on these tea-gardens compares favourably with that in big towns. I believe that there is a good deal of abortion and prevention of conception. What we have done, and so far as I can see, the only thing to be done is to treat women during pregnancy and after child-birth with every leniency in the matter of leave and subsistence allowance. We give long leave both before and after, and many gardens pay R3 a month for the whole period; the average period of leave is 6 or 7 months. The mothers all get 3 months' leave after the birth as a minimum, provided the child lives. The leave over two months in normal cases is in the interest of the child. In my opinion the grant of leave on these terms is a much greater inducement to a woman to have children than a mere money reward, and it is right and desirable to give this period of leave. One finds a marked difference in the birth-rate on different gardens; the birth-rate is good on an old established healthy garden which depends mainly on sardari recruiting.

DIBRUGARH, 21st May 1906.

No. 211.—Mr. Gerald FitzGerald, *Manager, Chubwa Division, Chubwa Tea Company, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur.*

I have 1,300 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,920. The garden is 17 miles from Dibrugarh. At present I get in about 80 outside coolies and 80 Cacharis. I should like more labour, if I could get it. I have not taken any contractors' coolies for some time, but I should like to get a few family batches this year. I sent down 55 sardars this season; they brought up about one worker per head. I renew under Act XIII, with a two years' agreement. The bonus is R20 for a man and woman, and for big children up to R16. I supply rice at R3 to Act VI coolies, and at R4 as a maximum to Act XIII coolies. I pay 4 annas a haziri to outside labourers; they may earn up to 8 annas a day. I have about 500 acres of rice land, and this is being yearly extended. If sardari coolies come up free, I put them under a local Act agreement. I have used Section 90, but I do not see that it has given better results than Chapter IV. My sardari coolies cost about R90 a head. The sardar gets a bonus of R5 per recruit. My wastage is under 5 per cent. per annum, and my birth-rate is over double the death-rate. Every woman gets a bottle of grog, after giving birth to a child. Women get unlimited leave before and after child-birth; those not under Act XIII do not get pay unless it is necessary for the garden to support them.

I should like Act VI retained for new contractors' coolies. I would agree to all sardari recruited coolies being put under Act XIII agreements. I have also no objection to the local Act contract being done away with, after labourers have served their first indenture. I wish Sections 195 and 196 of the Act to be retained, as without them the Act would be of little use to us. If honorary magistrates were appointed at convenient centres, it would be a substitute which I should be willing to accept, if Government insist on depriving us of our present power. I should be agreeable to see the term of the contract reduced to three years, if that would lessen the prejudice against emigration to Assam.

I should be against any proposal to raise tasks, in order to make the intending emigrant an offer of better pay. The task we at present set can nearly always be performed well within half the day, and the coolie has the rest of the day to himself, either to work in his field if he has one, or do anything else he likes. This fact has much influence for good, and it would be a mistake to force the coolie to work harder. In the busy season he can work ticca and earn extra wages. Women can earn 2 pice for every seer over the task of five or six seers. Men get 4 annas for extra ticca hoeing.

I should be prepared to see the initial wage raised to R6 and R5. We could not make an initial offer of a daily wage of 4 annas for a man and 3 annas for a woman. That would work out to a monthly wage of R6-8 for a man and R4-14 for a woman for 26 working days. We should have to raise the rate of our whole labour force, if we did this. We could not cut down our present rate of bonus, or coolies would not renew, and the result would be that we should have to increase pay all round.

I am not in favour of making the intending emigrant an offer of 4 annas and 3 annas as daily wage, with the undertaking to supply work for 22 days only. This would give men R5-8, and women R4-2 for the number of days they have to get work. It would be open to the same objection, namely, that old coolies would have to be paid at the same rate and would have to get the same bonus as at present. It would be possible to make the statement of wages in the terms of a daily wage by offering men 3 annas and 9 pies and women 3 annas, and I should like to see this done.

I should be prepared to make the intending emigrant an offer of extra pay for the months of July to October, and could stipulate for payment up to double the ordinary wage for extra work performed.

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I personally could make an offer of land to intending emigrants. I have got land which I can give out, but many gardens are not so well off in this respect. The offer of rice land is a great attraction to the coolie. I do not think that anything would come of a proposal that we should import labour, and that Government should offer the coolie land on the expiry of, say, seven years on the garden. I should, in fact, object to such a proposal, as it would disturb my settled labour force. I would be greatly in favour of direct colonization by Government.

I should not be in favour of offering the coolie repatriation at the end of his four years indenture. I think it is very likely that only the worst coolies would go back, and they would not be likely to give a favourable account of their experience in Assam. The reason why people do not return to their country is that they are very well off here; they get cultivation and cattle and settle down in comfort.

I do not think that a suggestion to give leave to coolies who have worked well on the garden and let them go down to their homes would be practicable. We cannot spare many people, being short-handed for labour, and there would always be the danger of people down in the districts on a holiday being got at by the arkati. The latter would have to be under very strict control, before we could afford to give such leave generally.

I consider that Act XIII requires amendment in the way of legalizing the bonus. I should also like a clause penalizing the enticement of labourers, as I consider that some provision to this effect is necessary. A defect in Act XIII is that the conviction operates as a release, but I am prepared to allow this to remain; we should not make the Act too penal, and I would not press for amendment, although it would be desirable from the employer's point of view.

I consider that it is impracticable to have all recruitment for Assam done through a Central Agency. No workable scheme has ever been made out, and I do not think that the subject is worth pursuing. I should like, however, to see an official of the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government deputed to the recruiting districts to look after emigration, and explain the conditions of labour on the tea gardens to people there.

No. 212.—Mr. A. L. Playfair, *Manager, Greenwood Tea Estate, Dibrugarh.*

I have 1,000 acres under tea, and have a labour force of 1,600. About 50 of these are under Act VI, *i.e.*, a few newly imported coolies. My recruiting is all sardari, mainly from the Central Provinces. The labour force is ample. We make 7½ maunds of tea per acre, at about 7¼*d.* Included in the 1,600 are about 400 ordinary (*faltu*) labourers without agreement; about half of these are settled on our grant. We pay R6 and R5 with a bonus of R10 and R8 on Act XIII agreements. We supply rice at market rates when asked for. Act XIII agreements are only for one year. The *faltu* labourers are paid the same monthly wage, without a bonus. We give work to the *faltu* labourers regularly whenever they ask for it. We are exceptionally favourably situated as regards outside labour, being a very old garden. Practically, all our coolies except those under Act VI have rice land.

A sardar has to deposit R20 in cash before he goes to his country; if he returns with a coolie we pay his expenses and he gets a bonus; if he fails he has to pay his expenses and to refund advances up to R20. Our labour force has shown no wastage for the last few years. We have both jungle and rice land for the coolies; other gardens near Dibrugarh are not so favourably situated. Central Provinces labour does fairly well; as a rule we keep newly imported men from there on indoor work during the first rains.

I am also Superintendent of Digulturang Tea Estate in the Dum Duma district. For that garden, I have to get contractors' coolies, because it is a young garden, about 15 years old. A larger labour force is necessary there because the physique of the coolies is worse; they cannot work as hard as we should wish. We have over 900 coolies for 600 acres, and this is insufficient; 1¾ coolies to an acre is not equal to 1½ coolies near Dibrugarh. Sardari recruiting does fairly well there. We have rice land, but the coolies will not take it and settle in numbers. It is high rice land and only grows one food crop; we have 2,000 acres of rice land to give out if the coolies will take it. At Digulturang we have renewed under Act XIII for the last two or three years; formerly we renewed under Act VI so as to get a fair death-rate. We pay R6 and R5 under Act XIII, but men and women get R12 bonus, and all coolies get rice at R3 a maund. There is undoubtedly more drift away from a garden like Digulturang than from Greenwood. The coolie imported to-day is inferior to what he was 15 or 20 years ago. We import about 50 per cent. sardari and 50 per cent. contractors' coolies.

I agree with the views expressed by Mr. FitzGerald as to the working of Acts VI and XIII and the other general questions connected with labour.

No. 213.—Mr. F. E. Winsland, *Visiting Inspector, Jokai, Jhansi and British India Tea Companies' Gardens and Jaipur Tea Estate, Dibrugarh.*

The gardens which I superintend are distributed over the Upper Assam Valley. We want more labour on all the gardens. We pay the wages customary in the districts in which

the gardens are situated. For instance, in Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur the wages are R6 for men R5 for women, whereas at Jorhat the wages are R5 and R4. The bonus up here is R12 and R10 and in the Jorhat district R10 and R8. All new labourers, whether under the Act or not, receive the Act pay. On the gardens near Dibrugarh rice land is given out to coolies in large quantities. Up Sadiya-road way the coolies do not take up rice land so freely, though we endeavour to induce them to do so, but in North Lakhimpur conditions in this respect resemble those at Dibrugarh. **Lakhimpur.**

Renewals are under either Act VI or Act XIII according to the garden *dastur*. The coolie himself is indifferent as to which Act he renews under, as he does not know the difference between them. The same bonus is given in the case of agreements of both kinds. North Lakhimpur has been less opened out than the Dibrugarh district.

Sardari recruiting, taking it all round, has been very bad this year. We are willing to pay any price for coolies but cannot get them. Sardari recruiting is more successful in some gardens than in others. I take contractors' coolies, but as few as possible, for they are most unsatisfactory. Our sardari coolies are not as good as they used to be, but on the whole are fair. The contractors' coolies come up both free and under the Act, but mostly under the Act. Those who come up free or under Section 492, I. P. C., are not as a rule given contracts under Act VI. New coolies, whether under the Act or not, receive rice and other concessions as prescribed by the Act.

The Committee discussed with Mr. Winsland the colonization scheme referred to in the evidence of Mr. Bradish (No. 34), who was superintending recruiting for the above companies. Mr. Winsland promised to supply the Committee with a note which he wrote in 1904 regarding the labour question and the particular scheme referred to. Mr. Winsland stated that the scheme had been most successful on the gardens on which it had been tried and that it was now being extended to five other gardens.

Copy of extract from a letter, dated 10th June 1906, from Mr. Winsland to the Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

If I am correct in saying that the general impression is that we cannot do without the arkati, I suggest I am also correct in saying that so long as we tolerate him in his present form, he will have the money, and will discover the means, of rendering abortive any healthy scheme you, or any other body, attempt to bring into force. There can never be any improvement so long as a coolie can be sold for R130 per head in the recruiting districts, the coolie must be worth *nothing* at that end, and this can only be achieved by hitting the arkati, and I say hit him hard, in fact knock him right out, in his present form, and if we must have arkatis let us grow a new form of the species later on, after we have established free emigration.

If the Committee should recommend a trial of freer emigration and cannot see their way to getting rid of the arkati, would it be possible during the first year's trial for such scheme to suspend the arkati for a year, so as to give the new scheme a chance of establishing itself? We only want a fair start, to get away from the arkatis, and then the old order of things will disappear. A cheap through railway pass will assist greatly to this end.

Copy of letter from Mr. Winsland to Messrs. Balmer, Lawrie & Co., Calcutta, dated 7th June 1904.

Assam and its Labour Act.

I venture to send you a few remarks on the above subject, and as the problem of a satisfactory system of labour supply on our gardens is such a difficult one, and with so many opposite interests concerned, I only offer these as my own private views of a possible solution. I would explain that although it is of the failure of the present system of recruitment that I write, I lay no claim to any experience of the working of Act VI in the recruiting districts, I simply write as a tea planter with over 20 years' experience, and from an Assam, and a planter's point of view, and as such it appears to me, as it must to all of us, that the present system and methods of recruitment are, and are likely to remain, an utter failure, and to my unsophisticated mind the whole cause of this failure can be written in one word "unpopularity."

(1) The system is "unpopular" with the planting community because it is made the "milch cow," and at that cannot get requirements supplied, even with the scandalous rates now ruling.

(2) The system is "unpopular" with all Government officials who would like to see the whole thing at the bottom of the sea, and rightly so too.

(3) But above all, the system is "unpopular" with the class of coolie we require, *i.e.*, an honest hard-working ryot who will not dream, and is the last man to agree under present arrangements to leave his home for Assam. Why should he undergo (to him) the unintelligible ordeal of proving all sorts of things in law

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courts before the magistrates, to say nothing of various other cuffs and foolings, before he is allowed the *privilege* of signing a four years' agreement? Why should he be idiot enough to do this when he can get equally good pay on other work nearer home?

Here we have all three communities interested in the industry dissatisfied—the Government, the coolie and the planter. Who then does score over the system? Why, the people into whose pockets the planter's lacs and lacs of rupees fall every year, and who are in no way connected with or interested in the industry. The coolie does not benefit one brass farthing from our lavish expenditure, and the sooner we devise some system by which he secures the benefit of any outlay we make, the sooner we shall get what we require. What are we to do to secure this? I would suggest giving a trial to the common law of all nations and try unrestricted and unmolested emigration, and leave it to the planter and the coolie to make their own bargain on the spot. I am convinced that we planters can offer the coolie better advantages than he has in his own home or will get away from it, in any other industry. We can afford to advance him money to clear his debts in his own country, pay his road expenses to our gardens, secure to him so long as he works for us a piece of land free of rent for, say, three years, ask him to sign no agreement, allow him to live in his own basti close to the garden, let him work when he likes, and pay him for what work he does. In fact my ideal would be to have the coolie living under the same conditions as in his own country, with the extra advantage of being able to earn what money he requires from the tea garden close to his home; he could work just so many days per month as suited his circumstances and he felt inclined. Or in other words, why not make every tea garden in the Assam Valley the centre of a small colony? If the Government are keen on colonising the Province, here is their opportunity. Ask Government to give these planters, who have not already got it, land on suitable terms near each of their gardens, and if we abolish agreements, coolie lines, chowkidars, and that abomination to a coolie's mind—discipline, we shall, in my opinion, be able to secure the services of four coolies per acre of tea cultivation at a less cost, and more easily, than we are now struggling to maintain one and a half.

I have heard men say we have denuded the recruiting districts of suitable labour, but I cannot believe that the Indian Empire is so small that it cannot supply our little Tea Industry with all the labour it requires. Our trouble is more due to our rotten system, in which the only man who scores is the *one* disinterested party to the business; he certainly scores, and has the laugh of Government, planter and coolie, and pockets the rupees.

I beg to give the following illustration of the opinion of the coolies themselves on this scheme. At one time the Joyhing garden of the Jokai Company enjoyed an excellent force of good *jungli* coolies and recruiting was easily maintained until the past three years, but during my last year of management of that division I found that all the old sardars, who had been down to the recruiting districts many times and had brought up coolies year after year, absolutely refused to go any more, saying that it was not good enough, as the difficulties to be overcome were altogether too great, and they would rather keep out of it altogether. This coming from the very best type of sardars,—men who had many years' connection with their own people and who recruited none but their own connections,—only shows to what a state of affairs present conditions have brought us. The final result, so far as this garden is concerned, is that with its increased area labour is insufficient, and the management has had to insist on more discipline, *i.e.*, more work and *less leave*. I do not believe in a coolie wanting more pay, but perhaps *less pay* and *more* liberty, it suits his habits and constitution much better. The strict discipline our present shortage of labour forces us to keep up results in the survival of the fittest, but for a coolie's health and happiness give him more liberty and leave, and he can keep well and fit on half his pay.

With these sentiments in my mind I called a number of my old trusted *jungli* recruiting sardars together before I gave over the management of Joyhing, and discussed this idea with them, and finished up by asking them the question that supposing we sent down half a dozen of our best *jungli* sardars and they collected, say, 20 coolies each in their country, and on receipt of a telegram from the sardar I myself or the manager of the garden would come down and hand over money to the sardar in payment of debts, and cash for his way expenses. The sardar would take his coolies straight to the railway station and direct to Assam, without any delay for signing of agreements, registration or any other paraphernalia. On arrival at the garden they should be allotted a piece of suitable land to build their basti, and each working coolie be given a signed pattah for a piece of *khet* land free of rent for three years, and also agree that he could work when he liked, but binding himself to return (in work) the amount advanced to him to bring him to Assam within a reasonable time after his arrival. The sardar would act as village headman and all work should be carried out through him, he receiving a commission of so much on the rupee on the amount earned by his coolies. I roughly explained the whole scheme to them several times, and their unanimous reply was that, if we did that, they would guarantee to get any number of coolies to come up from their country. I again visited Joyhing about a month ago, after an absence of more than a year, and after explaining my plan to Mr. Collins, the manager, who is equally keen on a trial, we again sounded the sardars and they are as keen as ever on tackling the scheme. The Jokai Company hold suitable land for a colony of this kind at Joyhing, and I have promised Mr. Collins that I will write out an agreement as between the Jokai Company and these sardars and send it over to him to go through with the sardars, so that they may make any further suggestions

for our consideration. I now propose, after you have given this matter your due consideration and sanction, that we approach the Chief Commissioner and see if there is any objection to our receiving special permission to pass any coolies direct through to any garden under your agency.

This free labour system is already an accomplished fact on all gardens for, say, a ten-mile radius round Dibrugarh, on which gardens the labour question has solved itself, but this has been carried out at the expense of other and less fortunately situated gardens. But I can see no reason why, with a better and different system to the one we now possess, the same results should not be obtained generally by free emigration from Chota Nagpur. I would also suggest that with from 1 to 1½ souls per acre it requires the stamina of a first-class *jungli* to maintain the necessary work of a tea garden; with four coolies to the acre, castes less robust than the Chota Nagpuri might prove equally successful, thus opening out a much larger range for recruitment.

No. 214.—Mr. L. A. Grimston, *Superintendent of the Eastern Assam Company, Balijan, Lakhimpur.*

I have three gardens under my supervision, one within 4 miles of Dibrugarh, and two others 15 and 17 miles off, respectively. The gardens are fairly supplied with labour, but it is of an indifferent kind. For the garden near Dibrugarh we can get a good deal of *faltu* labour, and the coolies are mostly old hands and are of a better class. For the second garden, which is a small one under native management, we have a settled labour force and have not to do any importing. For the third garden, Balijan, which has an area of 1,047 acres, we have a labour force of 2,007, of whom 544 are under Act VI, 622 under Act XIII and 581 are free labourers; there are also 260 working children. This labour force is sufficient, but to replace wastage we import through sardars. The results of our recruiting have been as follows for the past three years :—

Year.	Number of coolies.		Number of sardars.
	Adults.	Children.	
1903-04	180	67	129
1904-05	266	164	246
1905-06	86	48	66

These results I consider very unsatisfactory. The cost per adult comes to about R80. The sardar is paid R5 per head for every coolie he brings up. He gets no pay while he is absent, and except in flagrant cases advances made in the recruiting districts are never recovered from him. My sardars work in all the Bengal districts, and also in some of the Central Provinces districts. I have also tried Ganjam, but I do not consider the Ganjam coolie a good worker. Our labour force has to be kept at a high figure, because of the inferior class of coolie we are now getting. With a better type, we could do with a smaller force. I am not recruiting through contractors now.

The majority of the coolies are brought up under Act VI contracts. Those who are not are either put under Act VI contracts here or are put under no agreement at all. It depends on the class of the coolie. People from Cuttack and Bilaspur take longer to settle down, and we should take a local contract. A Chota Nagpur or Santal coolie we should leave absolutely free.

All newly imported coolies draw the Act wage, and get rice supplied at R3 per maund. On the expiry of the original Act VI agreement, we pay a bonus of R10 to men and women for renewal, except on Balijan, where we pay R12 and R10. The wages are then R6 and R5. None of the free coolies have been on the garden for four years as yet and I have not considered what I shall do with them. If they ask for Act XIII agreements, they will get them with the usual bonus and increase of pay. None of these people have yet asked for such an agreement.

Of the 581 free labourers about 150 are *faltu* living on garden land outside the lines. These are getting R6 and R5. They get rice at the current market rate if they ask for it. Act XIII coolies do not get their rice at the privileged rate. They take rice from us, if we have been able to import at a rate considerably below the market rate. At present I am giving out rice at R4 per maund, while in the bazaar the rate is about R5.

Births are generally sufficient to replace deaths amongst my force, but there is a large wastage on account of time-expired coolies leaving. Central Provinces coolies in particular go away on the expiry of their agreements; they save money and then want to return to their country. I have not much rice land at Balijan, and that is a great drawback. I estimate that 10 per cent. of my force disappears annually. The sardars who have been down this year to Bilaspur tell me that many of the coolies who have gone back there are anxious to come up again. I propose sending for them.

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I agree with the views expressed by Mr. FitzGerald, but I should still like to see sardari coolies brought up under Act VI.

No. 215.—Mr. F. C. Moran, *Manager, Khonikor Tea Estate, and Director, Nokhroy Tea Company, Dibrugarh.*

At Khonikor we have 425 acres under tea, with a labour force of 1,127 working coolies. In the Nokhroy Company's gardens we have 975 acres under tea and about as many coolies. At Khonikor the labour force is quite sufficient, but not so on the other estates. The Nokhroy gardens are young gardens, and we have been importing contractors' coolies; our losses consequently have been very severe. This year the contractors coolies' cost ₹130 a head. I should say that from 20 to 25 per cent. of contractors' coolies abscond. They appear to have money with them, and it is impossible to catch them. All the contractors' coolies come up under the Act, most of them being from Calcutta. I have been sending down sardars from all the Nokhroy gardens, but with poor success except in the case of the Bilaspur sardars, who brought up about four or five souls a head. The other sardars only brought up about an average of one person each. I send down sardars from Khonikor, but only to keep up the connection. They have not done very well. The Khonikor sardari coolies cost about ₹60 a head. I import all I can as free labourers from Rajmahal and Dumka. The free recruits are put under Act XIII contracts for three years on arrival here, the cost of importation being treated as an advance. I do not put them under Act VI as I prefer to have them free. My Section 90 sardars go to a local agent for advances, etc. The results under Section 90 are no better than under Chapter IV. The sardars complain of obstructions and blackmail by the police and Babus, while they are on the way to the local agent.

At Khonikor I do not put old coolies under contract even under Act XIII. I only take their thumb marks. I pay a bonus of ₹10 per man and woman and ₹6 per working boy or girl. The pay is ₹6 and ₹5. On the Nokhroy Company's gardens we renew under Act XIII with a bonus of ₹12 and ₹10, the pay being the same as at Khonikor.

At Khonikor there is any amount of rice land which I give out to coolies. The other gardens are short of rice land. I think, however, that the bad class of coolie imported for the Nokhroy gardens is the cause of the extra wastage rather than the want of rice land. At Khonikor the annual wastage would be about 5 per cent. and on the Nokhroy Company's gardens about 10 per cent.

At Khonikor the birth-rate is very good. Beyond giving a glass of grog to the mother, I take no special steps to encourage births. A pregnant woman gets as much leave as she likes to take, but receives no pay unless she is under the Act or is destitute. In the latter case, she would receive rations. In the Nokhroy Company's gardens the birth-rate is indifferent. This is due to the bad class of coolies imported from contractors.

I agree generally with the opinions expressed by Mr. FitzGerald and do not desire to add anything on the general questions discussed with the Committee.

No. 216.—Mr. Peter Barry, *Manager, Mokalbari Tea Company, Dibrugarh.*

I have about 700 acres under tea with a labour force of about 800 living in the lines, and I can get in as many as 180 outside labourers. The garden is within 11 miles of Dibrugarh. We do a little recruiting in order to keep in touch with the recruiting districts, but my sardars are not successful, bringing up only about 1½ coolies per head. As a rule, the understanding is that the unsuccessful sardar is to pay his own expenses, but this is seldom enforced. The annual wastage of the force is about 5 per cent. As we have plenty of rice land close at hand, coolies come down from above and settle near the garden. Every year we import a few contractors' coolies. We renew under Act XIII usually for one year, the bonus being ₹10 for men and women. My main object in getting contractors' coolies is to get women. I supply non-Act coolies with rice at less than market rates. I have plenty of rice land of my own and my coolies also lease land at high rates from outsiders. Although my birth-rate is higher than the death-rate I do not think that the force will ever be self-supporting, because there is constant drift down towards Sibsagar, especially in the last two years. It is not a desire to be near their homes that takes the coolies away, but the land is better towards Sibsagar. My sardars always complain of obstruction, they often say by the police; they have recently mostly recruited in the Central Provinces.

I have heard the evidence given by Mr. FitzGerald and concur in the opinions which he has expressed, except that I should favour the offer of repatriation after the expiry of the contract to intending emigrants in the recruiting districts, provided the term of the initial contract remains at four years as at present.

No. 217.—Mr. G. H. Morris, *Manager, Rajgarh Tea Estate, Eastern Assam Tea Company, Dibrugarh.*

I have been down several times to the recruiting districts. I consider Assam is unpopular in the recruiting districts, especially in Dumka. I refer to a book used in the schools

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there in which Assam was decried. The people told me that emigrants never came back from Assam, and only when I brought down sardars from the garden did their relations believe that they were doing well. The difficulty is that the most contented coolies will not go back to their country. I have tried to make coolies up here correspond with their relatives, but I find letters are seldom delivered. Even bearing letters are not delivered. Money sent by money-order seems not be delivered to the right person. I have not been able to think of any measures which might be adopted to improve recruiting. When I supervised our sardars I recruited over a coolie per acre in two years; previously to that our sardars had been very unsuccessful. I think that an European from the tea garden, if judiciously selected, can be of great assistance to sardari recruiting.

22ND MAY 1906.

No. 218.—MAJOR A. E. WOODS, I.A., *Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur.*

I have been in charge of this district since the 21st December last. For 16 years previous to that, I had not served in a tea district. I consider that, though the conditions on individual gardens vary, the coolie on the whole is well off in this district. The cases filed under Act VI and Act XIII are not numerous. There have only been 8 or 10 Act XIII cases since I came here from over 100 gardens in the Sadar Sub-division. From the majority of gardens I get no complaints at all, but from a few gardens there are applications for discharge certificates. These applications generally come from gardens where the coolies are worked hard, I do not say unfairly. On most gardens it is recognised that in order to keep their labour force, managers must not insist on the coolie working too hard. There has only been one riot—a petty one—in North Lakhimpur since I took charge.

If Act VI were withdrawn, I consider that some supervision over tea gardens would be necessary in the interests of the coolie for some time to come. The power of inspection should be retained, similar to that under the Factory Act. I think that an inspection once every three years would be sufficient. 90 per cent. of the gardens in this district are well run and do not need to be frequently inspected.

In my opinion, Act VI is not required in the greater part of this district. I say this as the result of my own observation and also from hearing the opinions expressed to me by many planters. I cannot speak as to conditions at Dum Duma or North Lakhimpur, as I have not been able to visit North Lakhimpur as yet and I have not discussed the question at Dum Duma. From what I have learned, on a good many gardens seasoned coolies are given Act contracts in order to keep down the Act death-rate, which might be high with only a small force, composed mostly of new coolies, under it. During the time I have been here, no planter has been prosecuted for enticement, and I do not think that such cases are often filed. There are a few cases generally against ex-tea-garden coolies, who, having left the garden for some reason or other, try to induce others to join them.

TEZPUR, 24TH MAY 1906.

Nowgong.

No. 219—MAJOR H. M. HALLIDAY, *Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong.*

I have served in Sylhet, Cachar and Nowgong for a total period of 11 years. I have been 2½ years in Nowgong. It is easier to procure labour for the Surma Valley than for Assam, and it is easier to keep coolies on the gardens in the Surma Valley because there is not so much land available for settlement there. Tea-garden coolies freely take up land in Nowgong and no restrictions are placed on settlements with them. Along the railway line land is given on 20 years' lease with the first five years rent free, but coolies do not take up this land so freely as was expected. They prefer to go to places in the vicinity of which ex-coolies have already settled and also in the vicinity of gardens. In Nowgong the planters make no complaint about land being settled with ex-coolies, they rely largely on basti labour. I think that Government inspection of tea gardens is still necessary to secure proper sanitary arrangements. I do not think that there are any gardens in Nowgong in which the coolies do not get fair play. The usual cases connected with the labour laws are applications by coolies for discharge certificates; some are contested, but very often there is no dispute, and in the latter case I give the coolie a discharge certificate on a typed form.

The prevailing opinion among managers in my district is that the Act should be retained but that it is worthless without Sections 195 and 196. They want power to prevent a coolie, imported at great expense, from being able to walk off at once to another garden. The mere fear of a term of imprisonment does not deter a coolie who wishes to break his agreement. Kayahs have acquired blocks of land and they entice both Act XIII coolies and also coolies whose agreements under Act VI have expired, to cultivate these lands. I agree that a penal Act is still necessary in view of difficulties like this. Gardens managed by their proprietors seem to have much less difficulty in keeping labour than others. I think that in the future there is likely to be an increased tendency for coolies to leave the tea gardens to settle in the bastis. They will not settle on garden land because they have no security of title, and are not free, and if land were given to planters to sublet to coolies the latter would probably not take it up. I think Government should settle land direct with ex-coolies in the

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neighbourhood of gardens. An offer of land of any sort might, however, be an attraction in the recruiting districts. A shorter contract and the offer of repatriation would also be attractive in recruiting. It would be necessary for an inspecting officer to see that the promise of repatriation was fulfilled. With repatriation the four years' contract is not too long.

In Nowgong the bonus on renewed contracts is generally R12 and R10. On some gardens the wages paid thereafter are R5 and R4, and on others R6 and R5. I consider the initial Act VI wage is low. The new coolie cannot work the whole month and earn the full wage. I should make the Act wage R6 from the beginning. Allowing 8 annas for luxuries, I estimate that a coolie spending R4-7-6 a month can live very comfortably. The expenditure on food in the Tezpur Jail is R54 per head a year. There is a great difference in the amount of discipline exercised on different gardens, but I think that there is a general tendency to relaxation. I think it would be a good thing if the Assam Government deputed an officer to the recruiting districts to promote emigration. I think that the agreements of a man and his wife under any Act whatsoever should always terminate together.

If Act VI is withdrawn from the Surma Valley, I think that Act XIII should also be made inapplicable to tea-garden coolies; Act XIII is for all practical purposes a penal Act, and if it is left, you have a penal contract in the labour districts and no control in the recruiting districts.

No. 220.—MR. J. HENDERSON, *Superintendent, Salonah Tea Company, Nowgong.*

I have 3,180 acres under tea with a labour force of about 3,500 working coolies. I employ in addition about 400 Cacharis, and an average of about 300 basti labourers a day. I could do with a good many more coolies if I could get them. I have been recruiting both through sardars and contractors. Last season I recruited 300 coolies, about 80 of whom were from contractors' depots. I sent down about 60 sardars to the Central Provinces and Chota Nagpur. The results were best in the Central Provinces. Very few of the recruits were from the Native States. I give my sardars a bonus per recruit of R15, but in order to reduce the advance against them I give sardars who have not done well R20 per recruit. If the balance against an unsuccessful sardar is heavy, I write off a portion and recover the remainder. Where Section 90 is in force I bring up the coolies free, and put them under four years' Act VI contracts up here. In other cases they come up under Act VI contracts. The sardars prefer recruiting under Section 90, and I think the results under it are better than under Chapter IV. I should like to see Section 90 extended. I get most of my contractors' coolies from Jubbulpore; they cost me about R115 a head landed on the garden. Single people cost less than this. They are not satisfactory and do not settle down readily at first. A considerable number of the people I have recently had, absconded. I recovered a fair proportion of the absconders, but others got clean away.

I almost invariably renew under Act VI. I prefer Act VI as there is a doubt as to the interpretation of Act XIII by magistrates. A conviction under Act XIII operates as a release and this is inconvenient. My garden is not unfavourably situated. On renewal I pay a bonus of R12 to men and R10 to women. Their pay is R6 and R5 respectively.

I should certainly prefer to keep Act VI, as I do not think that we could get on without it as yet. I should, however, be prepared to reduce the period of the initial contract to three years. I should prefer to see all my labour under Act VI, but it would be possible to work new sardari coolies under Act XIII, if the Act were interpreted in a uniform way, but I do not think that this can be attained by executive orders to magistrates. In the same way I could renew agreements under Act XIII instead of Act VI. I should like a short local Act providing for contracts for one or two years, a conviction not operating as a release and the bonus being legalised.

I cannot do without Sections 195 and 196. I think it is possible that without them we might lose a considerable number of coolies. There are black sheep amongst a mixed labour force such as we have got and they would leave and take others. Kayahs, vakils and shopkeepers also have taken up land and hold out inducements to coolies to settle on it. I make considerable use of these sections, and I think that the coolie prefers to be arrested by the garden staff rather than by the police.

I should be prepared to give R6 to men and R5 to women from the commencement of the initial contract, and I should not object to the pay being stated as a daily wage. From April to November I could guarantee to pay ticca for extra work performed.

I have not much rice land on my garden, and I have given out most of what I have got to my coolies. All the surrounding Government land has been taken up by ex-coolies of my gardens. I get a certain amount of labour from them, but my neighbours get more, as some of them settle at a distance from my gardens. I think that an offer of Government land to intending emigrants after they had served a term of years on a garden might help recruiting.

I would be quite willing to offer repatriation at the expiry of the contract to emigrants in the recruiting districts as an inducement to emigration, but I think few coolies would avail themselves of this privilege.

In my opinion contractors are necessary, but they should all be licensed. I would not favour a Central Recruiting Agency unless it were worked by Government.

I need to recruit about 10 per cent. of my labour force annually to supply deficiencies.

No. 221.—Mr. W. M. Lyall, *Superintendent, Nowgong Division, Chubwa Tea Company, Nowgong.*

I have 2,400 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,800 adults and about 400 working children. I get up to 600 or 700 labourers from the bastis and also 400 Cacharis, but I could do with more labour. I recruit mainly through sardars; this year the Nonoi division has done well with over 2 coolies per head. The Kellyden division has not done so well as 80 sardars have so far sent up only 45 coolies. Nonoi usually does better than Kellyden, as it has a better connection in Jubbulpore. This year I have taken no contractors' coolies; last year I got some, but they mostly ran away.

I renew under Act XIII for one or two years; if the coolie wants a big advance and a four years' contract, I give an Act VI contract. On one division I pay R6 and R5, and on the other R5 and R4, with a bonus of R10 and R9 in the former case and of R12 and R10 in the latter. I offered to pay R6 and R5 with a bonus of R6 and R5 on the latter division, but the coolies refused to accept this. Living is cheaper for the coolie on that division. Personally, in view of the increasing competition for labour, I should not object to paying R6 and R5 from the first year, but I doubt whether it would attract more labour. I have no objection to putting a daily wage in the contract. Daily payments were started on one garden near me but abandoned at the request of the coolies, who said that they never saved any money. I supply rice at market rates to coolies who ask for it. I have given out something under 100 acres of rice land. Central Provinces coolies do not care much for this, but old and *jungli* coolies like it.

I consider that the recruiting question is a serious one. I think that the first thing to be done is to secure the active sympathy of officials in the recruiting districts. At present they are unsympathetic or actively opposed. I do not use Section 90 because the sardar has to escort back each individual coolie. My sardari coolies have therefore to be registered, and just as much difficulty is experienced in registering a sardari coolie as a contractor's coolie.

I am not prepared to forego Sections 195 and 196. I do not think that they are unpopular, as a coolie in Assam does not care whether he renews under Act VI or Act XIII. The coolie has always been accustomed to being caught if he breaks his contract. A coolie prefers being arrested by his employer. I should not be content if the sections went and honorary magistrates were appointed to issue warrants; but if the sections are repealed the appointment of such magistrates will be absolutely necessary.

I am strongly of opinion that all contractors should be licensed.

I should be willing to reduce the initial contract to three years, but the coolie would lose the benefit of rice at R3 a maund for his fourth year. I think it would help recruiting if the Assam Government deputed a suitable officer to the recruiting districts to encourage emigration.

I take my annual wastage at 5 or 6 per cent. Hitherto births have not kept pace with deaths, as we have come through very unhealthy times owing to the *kala azar* epidemic.

It would not suit me if the employer of a coolie imported by me had to pay me the cost of importation; I want the coolie and not the money. I am quite willing to send coolies on a visit to their country, if it would popularize emigration to the tea gardens.

GAUHATI, 28th May 1906.

No. 222.—Mr. A. H. Green, *Part Proprietor and Manager, Killing Valley Tea Association, Nowgong.*

I have 560 acres under tea, with a labour force of 500 working coolies. I employ besides in the busy season an average of 200 ex-coolies of the estate, who have formed villages in the neighbourhood. My annual wastage is about 10 per cent., and I need to recruit every year to replace deaths and people who return to their homes or settle in the surrounding villages. I have always recruited through sardars for the last 25 years, and my coolies have been almost entirely worked free. Four years ago, when the Santal Pergannas were closed to free recruiting, I had to bring people up under Act contracts, but since the district has been opened to recruiting under Section 90, I have reverted to the free system. Last season I sent down 24 sardars who recruited 96 souls. This season up to date 43 sardars have brought up 185 souls. The average cost last year was R30 per head, and this year I expect the average to fall to R25. I have my own Babu at Dumka who has a special place of accommodation. I give my sardars no pay while they are recruiting, but they receive a bonus of R2 per recruit. The sardar's working expenses are also paid, but he is allowed no heavy advances. All advances to intending emigrants are paid to them direct by my Babu, and are recovered from them on the garden, excluding of course railway fare and

Nowgong. *khoraki.* I put these people under no contract at all, and there is no understanding that they should remain for any fixed period on the garden. I have worked this system for 25 years. It is a great difficulty that a Section 90 license cannot be issued to new coolies till they have been six months on the garden, and I have lost several batches of coolies through having to observe this procedure. I calculate that at a very moderate estimate 25 per cent. of my coolies remain permanently on the garden, and that another 25 per cent. will settle permanently on Government land, after having served for four or five years on the garden and saved enough money to take up land. I have known the recruiting districts for the last 15 years. It is my belief that if I had demanded a four years' contract from the coolies recruited by my sardars, I would not probably have got more than 10 people per annum. I do not think that I am more favourably situated than other gardens in Assam. I expect that when the railway to Gauhati is open there will be an improvement, as coolies prefer to travel by rail rather than by steamer.

I think that if the arkati were abolished it would greatly aid our free recruiting, and would tend to the removal of abuses. If the penal clauses of Act VI were done away with, I think it would stop abuses and foster free recruiting. From what I have seen of the contractors' system, I am of opinion that it is the chief obstacle to free sardari recruiting. The system under which a coolie can be enticed away from a closed district and put under contract in a free recruiting district, is objectionable and should be done away with.

To work a garden with free labour, the labour force should be from one-fourth to one-third stronger than under a penal contract system. Personally, I should prefer to have the whole of my labour force under Act VI, as I think, if properly worked, it is a good Act, but I cannot recruit sufficient labour under it. Coolies, when they come up here, have no intention of staying permanently, but after a year or two find themselves so much better off than in their own country that they settle in the Province. Even coolies who have been up six or seven years have sometimes a desire to return to their country, but they generally come back again and do so at their own expense. The failure of coolies to return to their country tends to give Assam a bad name, for their relatives do not understand that they have settled here.

I pay my coolies R6 and R5 from the commencement, and work them easily for the first month, after which they have to do full work for full pay. I find that my sardari coolies can do full work after one month. If a man does not do his full task, his friends help him.

I consider that the present rates of pay are ample, and that a rise, at present at least, is unnecessary. I have seen the coolie in his own home, and I think he lives very much better here than there. Rice is now R4 per maund, which is about R1 dearer than usual. I supply rice to the coolies at bazaar rates.

I have only got about 60 acres of rice land, all of which I let my coolies cultivate rent-free. Coolies are very anxious to take up land and pay as much as R20 a *pura* (1¼ acres) as sub-lessees.

Mine is the only garden in the district which works free. I do not think that Assam can do without Act VI at present. The change should be gradually brought about by the gardens themselves. I would leave local Act VI contracts. I do not think pressure is now brought upon coolies to renew their agreements, as they know their rights and are ready enough to run to cutchery. I do not, however, think that it is fair to recruit a coolie free under Section 90 and then to put him under an Act VI contract up here. It is not that I think that Act VI causes hardship to the labourers, but that having been recruited as free it is good policy to let them remain so. I believe that the weakly coolie would not be so well off under a free system as under Act VI, as the latter provides for the weakly as well as the able-bodied labourer, and in this respect it is an undoubted protection to the emigrant. Looking to the character of the coolie, I think that the power of arrest without warrant is one which we should have even under a free system or Act XIII, and much more so under Act VI. Personally I have not suffered much from enticement. I think it would be inadvisable to reduce the term of contract, for though more people might come up for a shorter period, they would probably cost as much and would demand the usual bonus for renewal at the end of two years.

I have never used Act XIII.

To keep up a flow of labour, it is necessary that people should go to and fro between the recruiting and labour districts.

TEZPUR, 23RD MAY 1906.

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No. 223.—MR. G. J. CATTO, *Manager, Attarikhat Tea Estate, Mangaldai, Darrang.*

I have 1,725 acres under tea in the three gardens under me. My labour force is about 3,000. I am well supplied with labour compared with other gardens, but could do with more. I have been recruiting this year and previously through sardars. Last year I got a few contractors' coolies. I sent down 5 sardars this year to Jubbulpore to recruit in the Maihar State of the Central India Agency. They have sent up over 140 people. The latter came up free, and I do not propose to put them under any agreement. The sardars sent to recruit in the Jubbulpore district itself have done practically nothing. My labour force is principally under Act XIII. I pay R6 to men and R5 to women. I give an advance of R12 to men and women, recovering R1 per month.

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New coolies are paid ₹5 and ₹4 for the first year, after which their pay is raised to ₹6 and ₹5. The contractors' coolies I obtained last year were from Raniganj. They came up under contract under Section 492, Indian Penal Code. Only a few absconded, but they were not a good class of labourers. A sardar going down to his country is put under a four years' Act VI agreement. I also give a number of Act VI local agreements to coolies who are not of good character. They receive the same advance and pay as Act XIII coolies. The labourers are aware of the difference between Act VI and Act XIII agreements. I should prefer to reain the local Act VI agreement, though I should not strongly object to its abolition.

The withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 would not affect us at all. If a coolie absconds we cannot catch him.

I could get on quite easily without Act VI. I do not think that we could do without contractors as I do not see how new gardens can get their labour without them. I am of opinion, however, that a moderate check over them would still be required if Act VI were repealed.

There is very little rice land available in the immediate vicinity of my gardens. What land I have I give out to my coolies. The Central Provinces people grow wheat and oats. I do not stock rice as the bazaar price is below ₹3 per maund, and most coolies prefer to buy *dhan* and husk their own rice.

If it were not that I am extending cultivation, it would not be absolutely necessary for me to recruit, as my labour force, supplemented by local Assamese and Cachari labour, would be sufficient. I pay the Assamese and Cacharis ₹6 and ₹5, but their work is not satisfactory; they frequently absent themselves.

My people all settle down in the neighbourhood of the garden and some of them own land as far as 7 miles from the garden. When they take up land they do not sever their connection with the garden.

I have no trouble with enticement. Act XIII serves our purpose fairly well, but if there is legislation I should like it enacted that a conviction should not operate as a release. very seldom prosecute under Act XIII.

I should like to see Section 90 extended.

My coolies earn a good deal by ticca. In the plucking season women earn as much a 13 annas and ₹1-2-0 working ticca on Sundays. The men can earn ticca by hoeing overtime from the end of May to the end of September.

No. 224.—Mr. A. Y. Thomson, *Superintendent, Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Company, Tezpur, Darrang.*

I superintend the working of seven gardens with an area of about 5,100 acres under tea and a labour force of about 8,000 working coolies. The labour force is sufficient. The minimum force with which we consider we can work is 1½ coolies per acre. I recruit every year both through sardars and contractors. I sent down about 300 sardars this season and they have brought up about 300 recruits; a good many of them, however, have not returned as yet. Our recruiting is done chiefly in Ranchi. I attribute the poor results chiefly to official opposition. I think that sardars frequently do not bring their coolies to the court, because of obstruction from the police on the way in and of the unsympathetic attitude of the magistrate when they come before him. I can quote the case of a sardar of mine who brought in his wife for registration. The magistrate required evidence of relationship, and the woman's father came in. By that time the sardar had returned home, and the magistrate refused to let his wife proceed unless he returned for identification by his father-in-law. The consequence was that the woman was detained about three months. This sort of thing alarms sardars. I used Section 90 for the first time this year, and the results have been better. A sardari coolie costs me on an average ₹90; Central Provinces coolies and Ganjamis come as low as ₹50. The sardar receives no pay while recruiting, but receives ₹40 per head for first class coolies and ₹20 for second class. This bonus is included in the average quoted above. I also allow each sardar ₹5 *khoraki* and his way expenses. All advances made to the sardar are recovered from his bonus, but if the bonus does not cover the advances the balance is written off. About half the coolies come up under contract under the Act and about half free. The latter are put under local Act VI contracts for four years on arrival. I have sent sardars to Bilaspur, Jubbulpore and Ganjam also, but merely to keep the people whom I have got from those districts contented, as that class of labour does not thrive well here. I am only taking a few contractors' coolies, chiefly with the object of forming a new connection. They are obtained from Purulia, and come up under contract under the Act.

Practically the whole of my labour force is under Act VI. Up to five years ago I used Act XIII entirely for local agreements and renewals on several gardens, but I found it necessary to give up this system, because the action of the magistrate made the working of Act XIII impossible, and because enticement of my labour took place and I had no remedy against it. The magistrate on certain occasions refused to issue warrants under Act XIII, or to recognize days of absence though my contracts were for a period of days. The punishments also were insufficient. Since 1902 I have used Act VI almost entirely. I do not think that the time

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has yet arrived for the withdrawal of the Act from this district. When the railway is made to Tezpur, and communications are improved and the country opened up, it may be possible to do without the Act, as there should then be an ample supply of labour, owing to there being a larger settled population and the means of transit being easier and cheaper. Coolies do not like the steamer journey. I consider that the Act is necessary, primarily, as a security for the cost of importation; secondly, for the protection of the coolie; the payment of full pay to emigrants during the first six months after their arrival, the cheap rice, medical attendance and good houses are necessary both for the welfare of the coolie and the good name of the tea industry. I certainly think that but for the Act the treatment of the coolie on some gardens might tend to the detriment of recruiting. I consider that a good many coolies owing to nostalgia within the first three months would return to their country if we had not the protection of the Act, whereas when they stay a little on the garden they settle down contentedly for long periods. Thirdly, we require protection against enticement. There was, and I fear still may be, a great deal of both active enticement and of harbouring of coolies in a neighbouring district. In the district itself there is a local Association rule prohibiting any garden employing a coolie within two years of his leaving another garden, without the consent of his previous employer, which is given in ordinary circumstances. The limit was extended from six months to two years, because it was found that some gardens enticed away labourers and allowed them to remain the six months on or near the garden and then gave them employment.

Before Act XIII could be made workable the bonus should be legalised, there should be a provision against enticement of labour, facilities should be given for the prevention of desertion and the arrest of absconders, and it should be enacted that a conviction should not operate as a release. There should also be protection to the coolie. For these reasons I prefer to see Act VI retained to a modified Act XIII. I should be prepared to accept Act XIII for renewal of agreements without the addition of any of the provisions I have suggested, except as regards protection against enticement and a conviction operating as a release, but steps should be taken to insure uniformity in the administration of the Act. I consider that a provision enabling an employer to recover at his option either the labourer imported or the cost of importation, plus a sum to cover expenses and damages suffered from another employer who had employed him, up to a fixed number of years after the labourer's arrival on the garden would be of great benefit to the industry. I am not prepared to accept Act XIII for labourers newly imported through garden sardars. I think that gardens in this Province, which are working their newly imported coolies free, are benefiting by the moral effect of Act VI.

I consider that, where the manager is not proprietor, the interests of the manager and the coolie are not always identical, and that there is a danger that from motives of economy or from neglect, the coolie might lose the advantages at present secured to him if Act VI were repealed.

I should strongly oppose the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 of Act VI. The right to arrest under these sections is the backbone of the Act. I do not know of any alternative which would make up for the withdrawal of these sections.

I think the repeal of the Act in the Surma Valley will damage us to a certain extent, but not largely, as the Valley mainly draws on a different source of supply.

I have never heard of a practical scheme for having recruitment carried out by a Central Agency. I have devoted some attention to the subject, but I do not think that there is any solution of the difficulty of distributing the labour recruited. The demand being greatly in excess of the supply, it would be impossible to satisfy the requirements of employers, and they would be forced to go behind the Agency and make their own arrangements.

I consider that it is necessary to keep contractors. Without them we could not get an adequate supply of labour. I am in favour of placing contractors who are working under Section 92 of the Act under Chapter III, and having them licensed. It may decrease the supply of labour for a time, but it will be to our ultimate benefit.

I wish to see Section 90 extended to all districts. I think the cross-examination of emigrants by the registering officer has done much to deter emigration. I should like to see the journey made less formidable to the emigrants. At present they are interfered with by underlings of all kinds and the employés of unscrupulous contractors. Some arrangements on the lines of the Ceylon tin-ticket system are wanted, by which Government or the Railway Companies should see to the conveyance of the coolies to tea-districts with the least possible inconvenience and interference.

As I have said, I am opposed to giving up the Act VI contract as an inducement to people to come to Assam, and I am not prepared to say that its abolition would lead to our getting an increased supply of labour at least for many years to come. I would not reduce the term of the initial contract. If we brought the coolie up for a shorter period, we should not be able to treat him so well as we do now. Knowing that he is coming up for a term of years, we can afford to look after his comfort in many ways which we could not do if he came for only a short period.

I pay the Act wages, and on renewal the coolie gets a bonus and goes back to R5 and R4. The bonus is R30 for a man and R24 for a woman for a two years' local contract under Act VI. I do not think that any increase of wages which we could afford to give would

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affect recruitment. I personally believe that it would be better to pay at a uniform rate of ₹5-8 throughout the term of contract. I consider that we could stand a slight increase of pay, if we thought the coolie required it, and if we thought it would induce more people to come to us. But I hold that the pay at present offered, or in the alternative a wage of ₹5-8 for the term of contract, is ample for the coolie, with the benefits which we confer on him in the shape of full payment for a light task for the first six months, the grant of sick allowances, the supply of rice at cheap rates and the provision of other conveniences which we make. I should prefer to see the offer of the wage remain as at present in the terms of a monthly rate. I should be strongly opposed to raising the task so as to be able to make the intending emigrant an offer of a higher wage. In the long run it would do us more harm to take extra work from the coolie than to keep his wage as it is at present. I have no proposal to make as to placing before the intending emigrant the fact that he can earn extra wages by extra work.

As an incentive to emigration I should be prepared to see an offer of repatriation made to emigrants, after their term of service is over. There are many difficulties in the way, I admit, but in order to popularise Assam, I consider the offer would be a move in the right direction.

I am in favour of letting people have leave to visit their country, but my experience has been that very few coolies would avail themselves of such an offer. I did this systematically on one garden in which I have an interest, but found that the privilege was not taken advantage of to any extent. Coolies came back and said they were bled by their relations, and gradually people ceased to take leave. I had hoped that the grant of leave would popularize the garden, but the result was practically nil.

Discipline is now much less strict than it used to be in the matter of turning people out to work. I find that on my largest garden in 1899 the percentage of people who worked daily was 87 of the labour force. This year, for the corresponding month, the percentage was 73. The advisability of treating the coolie with greater freedom has in part led to this, and the coolie has also become more independent. Six or seven years ago the coolie was not excused work unless he was ill. Now he has much more of his own way. I think the health of the force has improved owing to the easier conditions of work. The task has since been reduced by 25 per cent. Probably the discussions on Act VI of 1901 led to the change to some extent.

I am in favour of the Local Government's proposal that grants of land should be made to gardens for the settlement of their working coolies. But there is very little land available in my neighbourhood for this purpose, and I could not unfortunately benefit by any such scheme.

I have no other suggestion to offer for the improvement of emigration to Assam. But I would ask for the removal of restrictions on sardari recruitment by the extension of Section 90 of the Act, and also for the active assistance of Government in dispelling the present prejudices which exist against emigration, and in controlling the action of the subordinates of Government who at present interfere with legitimate recruitment.

The wastage in my labour force was last year 7 per cent., taking into account deaths and discharges. I consider that the wastage should usually not exceed 10 per cent. on our gardens. The death-rate is not counterbalanced by the addition of young people who have grown to maturity. The latter leave in large numbers for the bastis. Young women in particular get married to outsiders, who have settled down in the country. Young boys are largely employed by the Nepalis as cattle herds.

I have not noticed whether the lighter conditions of service in the past years have led to an increased birth-rate.

In the last three years the charges of recruitment have been as under :—

Year.	No. of coolies.		Cost.	Average per coolie.
	Recruited by contractors.	Recruited by garden sardars.		
			₹ a	
1903	280	570	1,04,449	123
1904	144	243	56,453	146
1905	332	489	1,02,360	125

The high cost is to be attributed to our only taking first class labour and recruiting almost entirely in Chota Nagpur. The cost of contractors' and sardari recruitment is not kept separately. In the same three years we have paid ₹54,574, ₹55,776 and ₹58,016 as bonuses for renewal of agreements.

The amount of ticca earned in the three months, August to October 1905, was ₹24,045, or ₹5-5 per head of the average force at work.

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24TH MAY 1906.

No. 225.—MR. W. F. PEXMAN, *Manager, Deckajuli Tea Estate, Tezpur, Darrang.*

I have 400 acres under tea with a labour force of 515 working coolies. This force is sufficient as I can get in basti labour, on an average 40 to 50 women in the pressure of the season, and I also employ 40 Cacharis for hoeing. I do a certain amount of recruiting through sardars every year. I sent down 14 last year, and they brought back between 25 and 30 souls. I sent them to Ganjam, Orissa and Purulia. In addition I sent down three Santals as free recruiters to Monghyr. They brought back three persons. My sardari recruits cost me about R72 a head last year. I give the sardars a R10 bonus for each working recruit, and they also receive advances at the discretion of the local agent; the advances are not recovered. The sardar receives no pay for the time he is recruiting. The three coolies from Monghyr were put under four years' Act VI agreements up here; the other new coolies came up under Act VI agreements.

On renewal of agreements I pay men R6 and women R4 as wages. I give bonuses of R12 and R10, respectively. I renew under Act XIII for from one to three years at the coolie's option. The agreements are for a period of days. The basti labourers who work regularly give Act XIII agreements, but those who work ticca in August and September are free. The latter are not given haziris, but receive two pice per seer of leaf. I should have no objection to the abolition of local Act VI agreements both for new and old coolies. I should, however, prefer to retain the power of putting sardari coolies under Act VI contracts in the recruiting districts. My experience is that sardari coolies do not as a rule abscond.

I have not used Section 90, so have no remarks to make on this subject.

I consider that the retention of Sections 195 and 196 is necessary to give us security for the capital we invest in our coolies. I should be in favour of the abolition of Act VI and of all restrictions both here and in the recruiting districts, but I think the time has not come for that yet. When the railway is open as far as Tezpur, I am inclined to think that all restrictions might be withdrawn, as this district, which is now rather remote, will then be brought into closer touch with the recruiting districts.

Though the contractors' system was necessary when new gardens were being opened out, the time for that has passed now, and I should like to see the contractor abolished. With the present bad market for tea, I do not see the object of extensions. I consider that existing gardens ought to be able to keep their labour force up to strength through sardari recruitment. We could not reduce the period of the initial contract, unless recruiting expenses were lower. It would not be advisable to increase tasks, and without that I do not see how we could afford a general advance of pay, but I should be willing to pay new coolies my final rates of R6 for men and R4 for women. I pay women R4 because they can earn so much extra plucking ticca; 4 and 8 annas a day ticca above their pay is common, and some women earn as much as 12 annas. I could guarantee a coolie in his country double pay during July, August and September for extra work performed.

I give my coolies land, but they prefer to settle on Government land in the neighbourhood. I have never offered land to intending emigrants in the recruiting districts. I believe in Sir Bampfylde Fuller's scheme of allotting rice land to managers on the terms proposed by him. I think that the local unwritten rule prohibiting employers engaging time-expired coolies without the consent of their former employers, who had not left their original gardens more than two years previously, was passed principally for social reasons. It is now practically a dead letter. My garden is on the low land and is healthy. Ganjam coolies thrive on it. I should be prepared to offer repatriation to time-expired coolies as an inducement to people to emigrate, provided the cost of transport were lowered.

No. 226.—*Note submitted by* MR. W. SKINNER, *Bindukuri Tea Estate, Tezpur, Darrang.*

The note records Mr. Skinner's views on the points laid down for investigation in the Government of India's Resolution No. 1384-92-15, dated the 20th February 1906.

The causes which have rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour.

I. (*a*) Competition, which has increased enormously of late years, by other industries, mines, railways, etc.

I am not in a position to speak from personal experience in the recruiting districts, but I gather from returned sardars whom I have for years closely questioned, who complain of opposition throughout. The village *pahan*, zemindar, mahajan all combine to stop those willing to emigrate from leaving. The subordinate police apparently contribute to, if not connive at, this obstruction. I find it difficult now to induce sardars to go to recruit, especially old coolies, as they tell me there is so much trouble. When they do go, they ask to go in batches to avoid being molested, which points to some absence of freedom. I cannot but think that were the sympathies of the executive in favour of helping emigration to Assam, and would they let it be known that any high-handed action would be strongly dealt with, much of the opposition now openly and actively carried on would cease.

Where the sardar has abused his privileges, punish him, but experience goes to prove that the law is very strictly administered against the sardar, and lightly against the *pahan* or his people, the zemindar, mahajan or their servants.

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One of the main causes of the unpopularity of emigration lies in that so few return, and undoubtedly a large proportion do not; mortality in former years accounted for many, but when we examine Government revenue returns and find that the colonisation of Assam by ex-garden coolies is responsible for 106,000 acres of land in some two decades, we realise a cause which accounts for the non-return of many thousands of emigrants. Here again the help of the executive might play an important part in dispelling this unpopularity, by making it known to all village headmen as one of the causes why very large numbers remain in Assam. The sardar's word is not believed, but the word of the *sarkar* is at once accepted.

(*b*) I cannot think so, through communication is not yet established by rail; again any sudden change would unsettle labour, and the industry is not yet in a position to do without some form of labour contract.

Whether the time has now come for withdrawing the Act.

(*c*) Some Act, as previously noted, would be essential, but any Act, which did not improve the prospects of *bonâ fide* sardari recruitment, and better control the contractor, would merely put a fresh Act on the Statute, without benefiting the industry, and the tendency of all legislation is to restrict the protection to the employer while relaxing the penalties to the employed. Act XIII protects neither the labourer nor the employer, is ambiguous, and can only be amended by executive orders, I assume; these orders can have no binding effect on officers in their judicial capacity, and it would be no remedy.

Whether if the Act be withdrawn a new enactment will be required and whether Act XIII either in its present form or with modifications will be suitable.

(*d*) Service in Assam is not unpopular I contend. I have three generations of coolies working, and to find two generations is not uncommon. Abuses unfortunately do exist, as they do everywhere, but in comparison with the total immigrant population they are not numerous. May I state that the fact that every case brought by a labourer against an employer, however trivial or unproved, being reported to the Administration tends to give undue prominence to abuses, whereas the thousands of happy and contented labourers are lost sight of in the desire to reform abuses. The Act gives every possible protection to the labourer, and but few abuses are allowed to pass unnoticed.

Measures to be adopted to render service in the Assam districts more popular, and to remove abuses. Withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 to be considered, as also recruitment through a Central Agency.

The withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196, with the present difficulties in securing warrants, would remove the main protection against the professional arkati coolie, which he would not be slow to take advantage of. The same powers exist in all the Colonial enactments, where the need of them is obviously less, while the sub-sections of these clauses provide ample protection against fraudulent arrest.

Organised recruiting by anybody may seem feasible, but in practice there are so many interests to be served that no working scheme so far has been devised. Some system similar to the Colonial emigration, which has the Government cachet and as such carries with it the good will of all concerned, would be the happiest solution.

(*e*) As before stated, Act VI is in itself one suited to our needs, it has been in existence but a short time, while travelling to the Province must be made easier and cheaper. In the meantime a wide extension of Section 90 should be made, by which the sardar may have his chance to recruit with the minimum of regulations, not as at present, the districts where most of the best labour comes from being closed, hence the sardar gets no chance of learning to work independently.

Expediency of extending the scope of Section 90 of Act VI.

(*f*) This Act has only lately been enforced in certain districts, but as I have no experience of the labour from Madras, I do not feel competent to give an opinion.

Madras Act V of 1866.

II. It would seem difficult to fairly carry on three systems of recruitment in any one district without confusion and trouble. There would be (1) the system practised by the Duars of free labour without any Government control, (2) that asked for by the Surma Valley memorialists under partial control, as I assume it is proposed to put the labour under some form of contract after arrival, and (3) labour for the Assam Valley subject to strict supervision. It is difficult to see how Government can differentiate between the two last, as if absolute freedom in the recruiting districts is permitted to the Surma Valley, this being the point of the memorial, while the labour so recruited will be placed under some labour law after arrival in the labour districts, though they will cease to be called labour districts, the Assam Valley may justly claim the same privileges in the recruiting districts on the condition of placing its labour so recruited under contract only after arrival in Assam.

Effect of the withdrawal of Act VI from the Surma Valley.

No. 227.—Mr. G. Bridge, *Singrimari Division, Mangaldai Tea Concern, Darrang.*

I have been about 30 years in tea. I have been for the last 10 years in Mangaldai. The area under tea belonging to the concern is about 2,100 acres with a labour force of 2,500. In the Majbat division we are somewhat short of labour; in my division it is sufficient. For

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the past five years we have done no recruiting until the present year, when 22 sardars were sent down. They have not been very successful. I have also ordered ₹5,000 worth of coolies mostly from Bilaspur contractors, but they have not all arrived yet. I employ a certain amount of local labour, say about 300 people.

All my force is under Act XIII. If coolies come up under Act VI, I cancel their argeements with their consent, and put them under Act XIII. I pay ₹6 and ₹5 to men and women from the commencement ; I have only one rate of pay on the gardens. I give an advance for an Act XIII agreement, not a bonus. The advance is ₹12 for a man and ₹10 for a woman. It is recovered by monthly deduction from the coolie's pay.

I have no trouble in working Act XIII. In ten years I have only brought two cases for recovery of advances. In both cases the coolies admitted the advance and worked it off. I think that Act VI is not required for the Mangaldai district. It is a cheap rice district and coolies are always ready to renew their agreements year after year. I have had no trouble with absconders. Coolies have gone down to their own country occasionally and have generally returned of their own free will. This year two people went down on leave ; they were quite at liberty to remain in their country, but they came back after a short interval bringing six other people with them at their own expense. I think there should be a provision in the Act for the punishment of men going from one garden to another and taking advances. It is difficult to punish these men, as they say they have spent the advance they have got from the first garden, on trying to get coolies or some such other false pretext.

If Act VI be retained, I should like some limitation to the period after which a coolie who has broken his engagement, can be arrested. For instance, if a coolie under a four years' Act VI agreement breaks his engagement, he should be free from arrest after the expiry of, say, four years. I can give an instance of coolies who had been seven years on a garden being arrested by their former employers and taken away. They were arrested on warrants as some part of their indentures on their old garden had not been worked out. These coolies had originally come to the garden on which they were working as time-expired men and had been taken on as such. The local Tezpur rule by which a coolie cannot go to a new garden until he has been two years in a basti is, I consider, a most unfair rule to the coolie. It practically binds him down for six years. Even if he has renewed for one year, he has still to go for two years to the basti, before another Tezpur manager will take him on. A number of coolies evade this rule by crossing to another district, and many of them come to Mangaldai which is down the river towards their country. I consider we are perfectly justified in taking such men. I would not knowingly take a coolie under an Act agreement, but the case of these time-expired people is quite different. In my opinion the hardship of the Tezpur rule and the easier conditions on the Mangaldai gardens have the effect of making time-expired coolies leave the Tezpur district, where discipline is stricter.

We do not supply rice to our labourers at a privileged rate, as the concession is not required, rice being very cheap in Mangaldai.

No. 228.—Mr. J. McSwiney, I.C.S., *Settlement Officer, Darrang.*

I have been in charge of the settlement operations in the Darrang district since November last. I have served in Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Mangaldai and Karimganj as Assistant Commissioner. I also served in Raniganj in 1901 as Sub-divisional Officer. My view is that Act VI is not necessary to retain labour on gardens where there is plenty of rice land available, and where the coolie can either cultivate a plot of land himself or buy his rice cheap. There is, however, a difficulty in keeping coolies on their present pay in localities where there is little rice land, such as the Borjuli bank in Tezpur and Dum Duma in Lakhimpur. I consider that without a penal Act the present Act pay is not sufficient to induce coolies to remain in such localities. The pay offered is sufficient to keep the coolie in moderate comfort, but owing to the higher cost of living he has to work harder and more regularly than he cares to. A man ought to live fairly comfortably on ₹3-8 a month, and on this he can afford a few little luxuries. In Mangaldai a coolie can live on ₹2 a month. Even with the Act, coolies drift away from unfavourable localities when their agreements have expired. An ideal solution of the question would be to abolish the Act and to let each garden go into the open market on its own merits. I doubt, however, if so drastic a step all at once would be advisable, for it would seriously affect unfavourably situated gardens. If it were not for the fact that most Assam managers are unaccustomed to working free labour, the effect of doing away with the Act would not be so disastrous to such gardens as it might be now ; many of them would find it difficult to change their system of management. I therefore consider that it would be inexpedient to make a clean sweep of the Act just at present. As a step towards a free system I would advocate the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 and the abolition of local Act agreements. I would leave the Act VI initial agreement for sardari coolies in the recruiting districts.

On the whole I consider the coolie is fairly well off, and a rise of wages is not called for except with the object of inducing coolies to remain on an unfavourably situated garden willingly. The system of forcing people into hospital when sick is very unpopular with coolies.

I do not consider that there is much active enticement of labour. Coolies who come to a garden are generally taken on, but are as a rule sent back if another garden claims them as being under agreement. It is commonly said that coolies are enticed to the Mangal

dai gardens, but I do not believe that this is true. Coolies drift down there because living is very cheap and conditions are easy. They very often give fictitious names, so when a warrant against a man is issued, the reply is given that he is not on the garden. There is no scarcity of labour in Mangaldai, as there are plenty of local Cacharis, all of whom work in the Sub-division. **Darrang.**

A good deal of land in Mangaldai is held by ex-tea-garden coolies and still more in the Sadar Sub-division. The settlement of such persons on Government land appears to be steadily increasing year by year. I would be in favour as an experiment of the proposal to allot plots of Government land to tea gardens for the settlement of coolies, the manager acting as mauzadar, but I am doubtful if much suitable land is available in the vicinity of tea gardens.

If Act XIII be amended, it should be provided that a reasonable amount of work performed by the coolie should be considered a full day, even though he should not have completed the task

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25TH MAY 1906.

No. 229.—MR. E. G. WILDE, *Manager, Bamgaon Tea Company and Singari Tea Estate, Tezpur, Darrang.*

I have 544 acres under tea at Bamgaon and 205 acres at Singari. The labour force on the former garden is 780 and on the latter 270. The labour force at both places is insufficient. I get a few basti women at Bamgaon during the plucking season. I have been recruiting for Bamgaon through sardars, and at Singari we have been getting contractors' coolies. The labour force at Singari consists of old coolies who have lost touch with the recruiting districts, and so are useless for sardari recruiting. We only averaged one recruit per sardar this year. The sardars were sent to Purulia, Ranchi and Sambalpur. The Sambalpur sardars said that coolies were not available, their relations having either gone away or being unwilling to leave. I did not use Section 90. My sardari coolies cost me from ₹85 to ₹100 per head. The sardar receives no pay for the time he is recruiting except an advance of one month's pay on leaving the garden which is not recovered. He receives a bonus per head of ₹20 for Chota Nagpur recruits and ₹15 for others. There is no fixed rule as to recovering advances, but in some cases I do recover.

I got up 67 contractors' coolies for Singari this year. They cost me ₹100 shipped from Goalundo, and came from Mr. Perkins' depot at Raniganj. They were a mixed lot and belonged to several districts. Three of them absconded, of whom I recovered two, and I returned five to the contractor. I should be opposed to the abolition of contractors at present, as I do not think they can be spared. They should, however, be licensed.

The contractors' coolies came up under contract under Section 492, Indian Penal Code, and they remain under their original agreements. I treat them exactly as Act coolies in the matter of pay, rice, sick allowance, etc. Some of the sardari coolies come up free and others under contract under the Act. I put those who come up free under Act VI contracts for four years up here. I renew entirely under Act VI and pay a yearly bonus of ₹12 to men and ₹10 to women. At Bamgaon they revert to the original Act contract rates, the pay increasing from ₹5 and ₹4 to ₹6 and ₹5 as provided by the Act, if they renew for four years. Coolies renew for from one to four years, the average being two years. At Singari the pay is ₹6 and ₹5, partly because of an old *dastur* and partly because the garden is less favourably situated than Bamgaon.

I have never worked with Act XIII, and I consider that it would be very detrimental to us to do away with local Act VI contracts for renewals. It is more necessary to keep an old coolie under Act VI than a new one, as he is more likely either to settle on village land or to be enticed away to another garden.

I am also opposed to the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196. I think that without them there would be unrest among the labour force, and that we would eventually lose coolies. I consider the power given under the Act to retain coolies is greatly to their advantage, as it enables us to do them better and prevents them wandering about from garden to garden in an aimless way.

I consider that the chief cause of the unpopularity of the Province is that people do not return to their country. They are so well off that they settle here. I favour the offer of repatriation and would be prepared to guarantee to send back coolies who had served on my garden for six years. I have tried this, and though only a few coolies availed themselves of the offer, 50 per cent. of those who did so came up again to the garden.

I have given out about 100 acres of rice land to my coolies, and I grant unlimited leave for cultivation to any one who likes to apply for it. At Singari I have more rice land available; at Bamgaon there is plenty of Government waste, and the coolies are settling on it. I am taking up land under the new orders for settlement of coolies, and I would be very willing to take up Government waste on the terms lately offered by Sir Bampfylde Fuller. I would be quite willing to offer intending emigrants some land with leave to cultivate it. My local Act VI agreements provide for the period of cultivation leave required by the coolie.

I could guarantee my coolies an increase of 50 per cent. to their pay for extra work performed for half the year. I do not think that we could at present afford a general rise of pay. I would favour the statement of the pay as a daily wage.

Darrang.

No. 230.—Mr. C. T. Dunlop, *Manager, Monabarie Division, Imperial Tea Company, Bishnath, Darrang.*

I have 1,010 acres under tea, with a labour force of about 1,400. I could get Cacharis but do not need them. My force consists mainly of Central Provinces and Uriya coolies with a few North-Westers. People from Allahabad do all right with me. My sardari recruiting has been satisfactory this year, 40 sardars have brought up 160 labourers. East Coast recruiting is usually the most successful. The Bishnath district as a whole is fairly well laboured. Recruits who come up free are put under Act VI here. I generally renew under Act XIII for one or two years; a few men who take three years' agreements are placed under Act VI. I pay a bonus of R12 and R10 with a wage of R5 and R4. Act XIII coolies get rice at cost price. I have given out 200 or 300 acres of rice land; I give land to a coolie in his fourth year and he gets leave twice a year to attend to it. It is rent-free for three years. Thus when a family settles down, one member generally goes and lives *faltu* and looks after the cultivation. Rice land adds largely to the income of a coolie and forms a great attraction to labour. I have taken no arkati coolies for five years. I think that Government should settle land with gardens which want it, for settlement with their coolies under the 30 years' lease rules.

I wish to retain the power to arrest new coolies; sardari coolies bolt as well as contractors'. I would surrender the power in regard to coolies on renewed agreements. It takes me four to five days to get a warrant, as I am 36 miles from a court. Even if there were an honorary magistrate in the district the delay would be too great. If local Act VI contracts are abolished, I should like Act XIII made more binding. I should like contracts compulsorily completed after punishment for breach. Coolies often abscond owing to some private quarrel in the lines, and when once they leave a garden they seldom return to it.

My annual wastage used to be 10 per cent., but it is now not more than 8. My garden is not more than 16 years old and children growing up are only now beginning to make good the loss by deaths. A few people return to their country every year, and some grow past work, abscond, or cultivate my rice land. There used to be a good deal of abortion on my garden, but I believe it has ceased now as I always took notice of it when I heard of it. It goes in epidemics, but the motive is obscure. It prevails even more among old coolies than among new. To make the initial wage R6 would not be a very big matter, but I do not think that it is at all necessary in order to attract labour. If it were proved that it would attract more labour, I should be prepared to reduce the initial contract to two years, as I expect a coolie to settle down in that period. I would undertake to repatriate at the end of a four years' contract, and I believe this would be a great inducement to intending emigrants. We must have more control over our labour in Assam than in the Duars because we make a finer class of tea. We have no rules in our district about the engagement of time-expired coolies; if a coolie has made up his mind to go, I let him.

I have never used Section 90 for my sardars.

No. 231.—Mr. W. H. B. Lawes, *Manager, Dikorai Division, Bishnath Tea Company, Darrang.*

I have 1,037 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,500 working coolies. The labour force is not sufficient for my requirements. I also get up to a maximum of 150 basti labourers during the plucking season. I could get them at any time but do not require them during the slack season. I have been recruiting through sardars and owing to the poor results have taken about 80 contractors' coolies this year. I sent down approximately 40 sardars this season, about 20 to Rewa and the rest to Chota Nagpur and Raniganj. About half of the sardars have not returned and the rest have come back with approximately 40 souls. My sardari coolies cost me from R60 to R70 a head, and besides that I give the sardar R10 per recruit. The sardar receives no pay while recruiting. An advance of R10 made to the sardar when leaving the garden is always recovered, but as a rule those given in the recruiting district are not recovered, unless the sardar has been playing the fool. The contractors' coolies are costing me from R80 to R120. Those received from Khargpur are satisfactory, but those from Ganjam are unsatisfactory and those from Raniganj riff-raff. Three of them absconded.

All my new coolies both sardari and contractors' come up free, except some recruits from Ganjam obtained through sardars who come up under contract under Act VI. I put all the coolies who come up free under local Act VI agreements for one year only so as to avoid having to send them into the station. They are put under contract immediately after their arrival, and I have never had a refusal. If a coolie declined to give a contract I should send him back.

I renew under Act XIII for one year, paying a bonus of R12 for men and R10 for women, and I pay wages of R5 and R4, respectively. I do not recover the bonus. I use Act XIII for renewals because it saves trouble, and the coolies consider Act XIII agreements just as binding as those under Act VI. I do not think that the time has arrived for doing away with local Act VI agreements even for renewals. New coolies like to come up free and give an agreement after they have seen the place, and old coolies who renew for more than one year are given Act VI contracts.

Darrang.

I consider that Sections 195 and 196 are the most important provisions of Act VI. In an out of the way garden like mine it takes a long time to get a warrant. I have very few Act VI coolies, so have no need to use these sections frequently. My Act XIII coolies think that they are liable to the same penalties as if they were under Act VI.

I am not satisfied with Act XIII. I should like a single Act legalizing the bonus and giving power to arrest an absconding coolie. A conviction also should not operate as a release.

I willingly give rice land to my people, but unfortunately I have not got much. There is no Government waste land suitable for rice cultivation near at hand which I could have. I would favour the settlement with planters of land which they could let out to their coolies, but I would not care to take it up in the capacity of mauzadar. The offer of land by Government to intending emigrants after a period of service on a tea garden would not benefit us.

I would be prepared to offer repatriation to coolies after five years' service, if that would be an inducement for people to come up here. I would like to see contractors abolished and I think we could do without them. They do us a great deal of harm.

I only put my new people under a one year's agreement, so I would have no objection to the reduction of the term of the initial contract to one year.

I do not think that we can afford to raise pay, but I can guarantee double pay for extra work from May to October. My men, however, do not want to do ticca after July. They prefer to cultivate their own fields. I should have no objection to the pay being stated as a daily instead of monthly wage.

The annual wastage of my force is from 7 to 10 per cent. My death-rate is very low and I have few absconders, but well-to-do coolies drift to the bastis.

No. 232.—Mr. H. M. M. Davidson, *Manager, Bargang Tea Company, Bishnath, Darrang.*

I have been 11 years in Assam and 5 in Bishnath. I have 1,120 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,700, which is sufficient. I have to buy contractors' coolies as one of my gardens is unhealthy, and sardari recruiting is unsuccessful. I get coolies from contractors in all parts of the recruiting districts. They average about R150 on the garden. I cannot get on without the contractor. I send down sardars regularly, but because of the difficulties of registration they bring back very few coolies. In the free districts the sardars are also unsuccessful; they say they are troubled by the arkatis and beaten out of the villages which they go to. New coolies sent down as sardars also do not do very well; they do not know their way about.

When contractors' coolies come up not under indenture, I put them under Act VI unless they are family people; the latter do not run away. They go under Act XIII, as also do coolies brought up by sardars. I do not put these people under Act XIII for the first year, they stay without any agreement of any kind. After a year they take an agreement receiving an advance of R12 for a man and R10 for a woman for each year of the agreement. The advance is recovered, it is not a bonus. The agreement is generally for three years, sometimes less. A man who takes an agreement for three years gets his R36 advance in one lump

The coolies who are not under Act VI agreements get R5 and R4 for the first year. When they take an agreement under Act XIII the pay is R6 and R5 out of which they have got to refund their advance. When a coolie under an Act VI contract has completed his term, I renew under Act XIII on exactly the same conditions as above, unless a man is troublesome, when he is kept under Act VI. The pay of my labour force is thus R5 and R4 except during the second, third and fourth years of Act VI indentures.

One of the gardens under my supervision, Bargang, is unhealthy, the cause being the water-supply and the unhealthy position of the lines. We have made improvements and are abandoning all the old lines, and I think the garden will now be better.

I could not get on without Act VI for new arrivals, but I could do without it for renewals, as is my present practice. The people who are settled work under Act XIII quite well and I never have had a case under it. The one Act helps the other and steadies the labour force. I should be prepared to see sardari recruited coolies come up free under Section 90 and take Act XIII agreements here. I would not want Act VI for such people.

I wish to see Sections 195 and 196 of Act VI retained; it is on their account that we want the Act. It is absolutely necessary to have some provision for keeping the coolie at least for the first year. He gets home-sick and has to put up with minor inconveniences because of the strangeness of his surroundings, and he has to be kept on until he gets over this feeling of unrest. But when this is over, he settles down contentedly and stays on the garden. I should be quite prepared to see the term of contract under Act VI reduced to two years.

I do not think that an increase in the wage would have any effect on recruiting. The coolie does not consider the question of money when he comes to Assam. He thinks he will get a bit of cultivation. I have rice land on one of the gardens on which the coolies settle. It is very valuable and keeps the labour there. I am trying to get more land for this purpose. I could guarantee to intending emigrants extra wages for extra work performed from May to October. I do not think it would be a good thing to increase the *nirikh* so as to be able to offer a better rate of pay.

Darrang.

I would be in favour of offering to repatriate an intending emigrant at the end of five years on the garden. I think it would have a good effect on recruiting, and it would not make much difference to the employer, as the coolie would generally not want to go back, he would find he was too well off in Assam. I also think it would be a good plan to let good well-behaved coolies go back to their country for a short holiday in the cold weather.

BORJULI, 26TH MAY 1906.

(MESSRS. ROBERTSON AND GORDON AND CAPTAIN KENNEDY *present.*)

No. 233.—DR. C. A. BENTLEY, *Medical Officer, Empire of India and Ceylon Tea Companies, Tezpur, Darrang.*

I have held my present appointment for six years and I served for two years previously in the Hailakandi Sub-division of Cachar. The health of the coolies in Hailakandi was better than it is here. I attribute this to the fact that the country there has been opened out more and for a longer period than is the case in this district. Food-stuffs in Hailakandi also were from 25 to 50 per cent. cheaper than here, and garden bazaars were much more numerous. The unhealthiness of this district is due to the fact that the high bank is cut up with hollows in which water lies. The heavy clay soil also is favourable to malaria.

The average death-rate over the gardens of which I am medical officer is about 4 per cent. and varies on different gardens from 2·3 to 5 per cent. There has been a distinct improvement in the mortality within the last six years, though I can hardly say that there has been less sickness. The labourers suffer chiefly from malaria. There is also a certain amount of *anchylostomiasis*, but not more than there used to be in Cachar. Anæmia here is generally due to malaria.

The birth-rate varies on different gardens; on some it is higher than the death-rate, but not much, and on others it is below the death-rate. There has been a gradual increase in the birth-rate of late years. On gardens where there is a large population of newly imported labourers, the birth-rate is lower than on one with an old seasoned labour force. Malaria and syphilis are responsible for a large number of miscarriages, and I think that abortions are sometimes procured. I have, however, only known one proved case. There is undoubtedly a class of people supposed to be skilled in procuring abortions and coolies also take medicines which are supposed to have this effect, but it is difficult to say whether these medicines really produce such a result or not as so many miscarriages are due to natural causes. Unmarried women naturally do not like to have children, and the fact remains that it is seldom that one sees an unmarried woman bringing up a child. There is considerable mortality from fever and convulsions among young children.

Women get from two to three months pregnant leave on half pay. They attend hospital as out-patients, and if they are not fit for work after that period they get sick leave till I certify that they are fit to work. We give sick leave instead of ordinary leave, because a woman on sick leave must attend hospital and take medicine, which she would not do if she were on ordinary leave, as coolies dislike taking medicine. As women often suffer from anæmia after child-birth it is necessary that they should be treated. In Cachar I had seldom to inspect pregnant women.

The large proportion of Chota Nagpur coolies stand the climate here fairly well from the first, but others require careful looking after for the first two or three years. Frequent inspections of the labour force in the unhealthy districts of the Assam Valley are necessary, so that the weakly people may be picked out and treated. The grant of leave tends to the healthiness of the labour force; coolies keep better health if they can turn out as they please.

There is a great deal of syphilis among new arrivals, generally of very recent origin. This applies to both classes of coolies, contractors' and sardari. The disease appears to have been contracted either in the depots or on the way up.

I estimate that the average expenditure of a coolie on food stuffs and tobacco, etc., would be about R3 per mensem.

We have not had to repatriate coolies for physical unfitness by order of the Inspector, but we repatriate sickly coolies of our own accord. The period of greatest unhealthiness is during the whole manufacturing season, which corresponds with the fever season; the extent of sickness is always over 10 per cent. at this time.

The following statement gives the percentage of births and deaths and the daily average of sick for the past three years:—

Year.	Average Labour force.	Percentage of		Average daily sick.	
		Births.	Deaths.	Number.	Per cent.
1903	8,307	3·09	4·51	1,024	12·33
1904	8,185	3·50	3·86	1,162	14·32
1905	8,275	4·13	4·96	1,133	13·69

(MESSRS. BOMPAS AND MILNE *present.*)

Darrang.

No. 234.—MR. L. J. GODWIN, *Manager, Addabari Tea Estate, Tezpur, Darrang.*

I have been in Tezpur since 1902, and before that I was 4 years in the Bishnath district and before that nearly 4 years in the Darjeeling district. I have 804 acres under tea, with a labour force of 1,000. I can get in 40 or 50 women from the bastis to pluck in the rains. This force is barely sufficient; I should like to have a coolie and a half per acre so as to make it quite easy work for the coolies. I sent down over 60 sardars this year, chiefly to Chota Nagpur, and have got up less than a coolie per sardar. I pay ₹10 bonus usually for each coolie and do not recover advances except from unsuccessful men, who went down to please themselves. I have taken between 50 and 60 contractors' coolies, since coming here. This year I have had about 25 and these are all right; in previous years I have had batches from Calcutta who generally managed to desert. Some Central Provinces labour does fairly well here, but not the Chamar or Teli from Bilaspur.

On renewed agreements my bonus is ₹11-8-0 for a man and ₹9-8-0 for a woman; this is because the coolie pays for the stamp on the agreement. The wage is ₹5 and ₹4. I have given out all the rice land I have, some 150 acres, and should like more. I generally renew under Act VI, because it gives me a greater hold over the coolie, and it is better for the coolie. Non-Act coolies never ask me for rice. Act XIII is not a sufficient hold over a coolie; if he wants to break his agreement he does not mind a week or two in prison; I have had several instances to prove this. I should object to local Act VI contracts being abolished, but I do not feel strongly on the subject. I am not at all in favour of the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196; though not often used, these sections give one just the hold that is necessary. I should not object to reducing the term of initial contract to two years; new-comers bolt because they are home-sick, not because they dislike the garden. I should not object to offering the full Act wage from the first year. I had experience of free labour in Darjeeling, and I much prefer working under Act VI; I could not get my present class of work out of free labour without lowering tasks. I fix tasks so that at least 85 per cent. of the force can earn the full wage. Not more than 70 per cent. of my force turns out every day. I give practically unlimited leave. There has been a great change in this respect since I have been in Assam; to give leave freely keeps the coolie contented and is better for his health.

I think that unnecessary difficulties are placed in the way of registering sardari coolies and that, if these were removed, we should get more labour. I had a sardar the other day who recruited his brother from Singhbhum, but they had to leave the brother's wife behind.

GAUHATI, 28TH MAY 1906.

No. 235.—MR. W. B. BRUCE, *Superintendent, Hattigurl Division, Consolidated Tea and Lands Company, Mangaldai, Darrang.*

I was 12 years in the Duars and I have been 4 years in Assam. I have 2,085 acres under tea with a labour force of 1,400 imported coolies and 650 Cacharis. I should like to import another 500 labourers. The gardens were decimated a few years ago by *kala azar* and cholera, and the labour force was greatly reduced. These epidemics started among the depot coolies, many of whom died and the others took fright and left. A splendid water supply has now been laid on, and the gardens are very healthy.

I recruit entirely through sardars in Bilaspur, the Santal Pergannas, Chota Nagpur, Orissa and Ganjam. Only Bilaspur has done well this year; about 2½ coolies per sardar have been got. Ganjam has done fairly: the other districts have done nothing. My coolies cost me about ₹60 delivered on the garden. The sardar gets no pay while he is away, but receives a bonus of ₹5, ₹8 or ₹10 according to the class of the coolie. A sardar who brings a coolie has not to refund any advances either received by himself or paid by him to his coolies. If the sardar has been unsuccessful, he has to refund his advances, exclusive of his legitimate expenses. This is not an absolute rule, as a good man is treated with leniency in this respect.

The people brought up are put under no agreement, unless they ask for one. Whether under agreement or not, they all receive ₹6 and ₹5 from the commencement and get full wages for a half haziri for the first six months. They receive all the privileges of an Act VI labourer. But nearly everybody asks for an Act XIII agreement for the sake of the bonus of ₹12 and ₹10. They take an agreement for one year of 313 days. Act XIII suits my estate, but I should be sorry to have to work it further north, knowing the interpretation that has been put on the contract by one Deputy Commissioner of Darrang. I refer to a ruling that the term of 313 days need not be served consecutively, and also to another ruling that the coolie on paying a small fine is free to leave the garden. On my present estate the coolies have, however, given me no trouble and I get on with Act XIII all right.

If Act VI were withdrawn and we were left with Act XIII only, I should nevertheless like to see the latter amended by legislation. Executive orders are not suitable for ensuring the proper working of the Act. In the first place some provision is wanted for the recovery

Darrang.

of an advance from a dishonest sardar in the recruiting district. At present I put a sardar under a one-year Act VI agreement, and if he absconds, I can have him arrested by warrant. Again, there should be a reasonable interpretation of the term of 313 days. I also consider that the conviction should not operate as a release, unless the coolie can show definite cause, such as ill-treatment, why he should not be sent back to the garden. A coolie with only a small balance of his advance outstanding takes a large advance from another garden and goes off. This should not be allowed.

I am quite indifferent as to Act VI being kept, if Act XIII is made workable by some such modifications as I have proposed.

When I was in the Duars there was much difficulty in obtaining labour. I attributed this to depletion of the recruiting districts and to good crops there. I think that there is practically no difference in the amount and quality of the work done in the Duars and in Assam. The Duars coolie goes out early in the morning and gets through his work without any ado, and he does it well. In Assam the coolie goes out later and takes longer over his task; he has not the physique of the Duars coolie as a rule.

Kamrup.

No. 236.—Sheikh Danesh Muhammad, *Gauhati, Kamrup.*

I have a small tea garden of 45 acres, worked entirely by basti labour. I pay wages at the rate of R6 and R5; the advance is generally R12 and R10, but a good coolie gets a little land for growing vegetables. Coolies get 6 annas and 5 annas a day in Gauhati bazaar. If Act VI were abolished, it would be difficult for planters to maintain discipline. Act XIII has become rather lax. Educated native opinion in these parts has no objection to Act VI. I have only about 25 coolies under advances. For outside labour I pay 3 annas to men and 2½ annas to women for a haziri, and they can earn double if they like.

No. 237.—Mr. E. P. R. Gilman, *Proprietor, Burdwar and Mandakatta Tea Estates, Kamrup.*

I have been employed on tea gardens since 1872. I have 730 acres under tea with a labour force of about 400 imported labourers and about 1,700 Assamese, 200 of whom are Cacharis. They nearly all live in the neighbouring bastis. I recruit every year about 50 to 60 free labourers through sardars. I get them from Bilaspur and Rewa. I never send down more than 6 or 7 sardars. Last year my new coolies cost me about R58 per head; the average will be lower this year. My sardars receive full pay while recruiting, and a commission of R10 per man, R8 per woman and R15 per family. I do not recover advances made to sardars. I do not take agreements of any kind from my people. I pay R6 to men and R5 to women for the first year, and R7 and R6 respectively in succeeding years. I do not experience any difficulty in getting my coolies to work. They turn out from 20 to 22 days a month. I have no muster. I do not supply rice at all.

As far as I am concerned I do not want Act VI. I have no trouble in getting as many coolies as I want under the free system, but if I demanded Act contracts, I think I should have difficulty. I have been down to the recruiting districts myself and was told that people would not come up under an Act contract. I, however, do not think that in other districts the Act can be dispensed with at present. Managers are so accustomed to working with the Act that they would experience difficulty in changing their system all at once. We have advantages in Lower Assam in the way of cheap rice, etc., which are not shared by other localities. Rice only costs R2-8-0 a maund this year near me, and last year the price was as low as R1-14-0. I have 600 acres of land under rice cultivation by my own ryots, and this practically supplies all my requirements.

Shillong.

SHILLONG, 1st June 1906.

No. 238.—Mr. F. J. Monahan, I.C.S., *Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts.*

I have been serving in Assam since 1892. I was Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar from 1892 to 1896, excepting about a year spent on leave and 3 months as Officiating Director of Land Records. Subsequently as Director of Land Records I toured over the whole of the plains portion of the Province, and later as Secretary to the Chief Commissioner I gained an acquaintance with the correspondence on the labour question. For the last 6 months I have been Commissioner of the Assam Valley Districts and have read all tea-garden inspection reports within my Division.

I do not think that the time has yet come when the districts of the Upper Assam Valley can do without a system of indentured labour. I consider, however, that the present Act requires amendment.

I am in favour of the withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196. First of all, I think that the impression of loss of freedom, which has its root in these sections, operates unfavourably to Assam in the recruiting districts. There are also certain abuses in connection with the system

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of private arrest in Assam. The arrest without warrant of persons not under Act VI contracts occasionally takes place. People of the emigrant class generally are subject to a certain amount of harassment owing to being stopped on roads and at ferries, steamer ghats and railway stations, on suspicion of their being deserters, if they cannot produce a discharge certificate. There have been cases of persons being arrested on the chance of their being deserters by people who had no claim on their services. Again an injudicious manager may think that because he has the power to arrest without warrant, he has also the power to confine a coolie who is likely to desert, and cases of this kind have come to light. All these are perhaps exceptional abuses in connection with the system, but I think that they are sufficiently numerous to justify the withdrawal of the power of private arrest, unless the retention of this power be shown to be absolutely necessary. In my opinion it is not under present conditions necessary. The original justification for the grant of this power to employers was that courts were difficult of access, and I think that that difficulty, owing to improved communications, has to great extent been removed. To afford facilities for obtaining warrants, I do not think that there would be any objection to the appointment of honorary magistrates with power to issue warrants in localities far removed from courts. My impression is that the practice has been not to enforce the provision requiring a coolie arrested under these sections to be produced at the nearest thana.

I do not consider that the Act is necessary for the protection of the coolie. I do not say that some short-sighted or inexperienced managers might not ill-treat their coolies, but under a free labour system coolies would leave a garden on which they were badly treated. As far as I know, there are no gardens situated in such remote areas that it would be possible for a manager under a free labour system habitually to detain coolies who wanted to go. I consider that the repatriation clauses in the Act are advantageous to the coolie, and that periodical inspections, especially by the Civil Surgeon, have had a good effect in improving sanitation and water-supply. If, however, there were no penal contract, I consider that the necessity for these provisions would disappear. As regards the amendment of Act VI, I think that the principle of legislation should be free recruitment of free labour, regulated recruitment of indentured labour.

The worst abuses in connection with recruitment are associated with a system under which labourers are recruited by unlicensed and uncontrolled agents, and are afterwards either registered and placed under contract at centres in the recruiting districts far from their homes, or are brought up to the labour districts and placed under contract immediately on arrival there. This is the system which prevailed before the framing of Act VI of 1901, and which is possible still in places which have not been notified under Section 3. On the other hand, in places which have been notified under the section, emigration is unduly hindered. The power of arrest without warrant having been withdrawn, the Act should be amended so as to allow of free recruitment generally, provided that no person recruited outside the provisions of the Act shall be placed under a labour contract under the Act for a year after his arrival in the labour district. This might be enforced by prescribing a certificate to be attached to reports of execution of local Act contracts, and by penalties, and contracts executed in contravention of the provision would be invalid. Such amendment of the law would meet to some extent the objection that the Upper Assam Valley districts will be placed under a disadvantage as regards recruitment by the withdrawal of Act VI from other districts.

Coolies recruited outside the provisions of the special labour law might still be placed under an Act XIII contract or one enforceable under the Indian Penal Code, but this would hardly be risked in the case of a coolie improperly recruited, as the employer's hold over him would be weak. The practice of enforcing such contracts by illegal arrest without warrant would probably cease if the power of arrest without warrant in the case of Act VI contracts were withdrawn.

I am not in favour of the abolition of local Act contracts, unless that step would meet with the general acceptance of the planting community. Subject to that condition, I should have no objection to their abolition. The employer would then be restricted to the use of Act XIII for the renewal of agreements. I should leave Act XIII as it is without amendment. Its association with Act VI has led to abuses in connection with the private arrest of labourers who are under Act XIII agreements. If Sections 195 and 196 are withdrawn, this objection would be removed.

I do not consider that there is a case for the reduction of the maximum term of the Act contract, as any one who wishes to import labourers for a shorter term can do so. In some cases a shorter term would not suffice to recoup the employer for the expenses of recruitment and of the coolie's maintenance till he has become efficient.

It seems to me to be anomalous that there should be under Act VI one minimum rate of wages and one stereotyped form of contract for the whole Province, in which conditions vary considerably. I am inclined to think that the minimum rate of wages should be fixed for groups of gardens having regard to local conditions. This might be attained if the Act were amended so as to allow the local Government to fix the minimum wages to be paid on gardens in a particular locality on the recommendation of advisory boards, composed of representatives of employers and district officers. On the whole, the coolie is certainly comfortably off on his present wage, and I do not think that a general rise of wages is called for. If an employer exacted from his coolies, in return for the statutory minimum wage, the full extent of labour authorized by the Act, namely, 9 hours' work a day for all the working days

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of the month, I consider that the statutory wage would be insufficient, for the coolie could not work up to this standard, and his actual earnings would be much lower than the contract monthly rate. I would also permit the form of the contract to be varied according to the circumstances of each locality. There might also be alternative approved forms of contract.

With regard to the question of repatriation, I would leave this to be offered by individual employers who may consider that it will be an inducement to intending emigrants.

The offer of rice land to tea gardens for the settlement of coolies is a step in the right direction, but there are comparatively few gardens with rice land near at hand which can take advantage of the offer, and there is the further difficulty that coolies as a rule prefer settling on land outside the garden. The offer of land to intending emigrants, after a residence of seven years on a garden, seems too remote to have much effect on recruiting, and any considerable reduction of the period to be spent on the garden would meet with opposition from the Tea Industry.

No. 239.—*Note submitted by* Mr. Norman McLeod, *Messrs. McLeod & Co., Calcutta.*

I beg to lay before the Committee a few remarks regarding the subject now under enquiry.

I may state, to begin with, that, though my experience of labour in the tea growing districts has not been gained from being personally in active charge of any garden, still I have been for nearly 20 years in close touch, as an assistant and partner of a tea agency firm, with the working of several large concerns, and it has been part of my duty from time to time to visit the gardens under our control in the Terai, Darjeeling, Duars, Cachar, Sylhet and Assam. I have had, therefore, good opportunities of noting the labour question, as affecting the Tea Industry, its difficulties, and of hearing the opinions of planters in the districts, without these opinions being biassed by any fear or favour.

With this explanation I will now take up the points in the Committee's Note on the Subjects of Enquiry *seriatim*.

(1) I should say the principal cause which has rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour is, that in the past more than in the present, the tea growing districts have been a *terra incognita*. This more particularly applied to Cachar, Sylhet and Assam. The coolies were unaccustomed to travelling by steamer for long distances; the districts got a bad name owing to the malpractices of arkatis; and since the passing of Act VI of 1901 there has been too stringent application of that Act in the recruiting districts.

(2) I do not think the time has yet arrived for withdrawing the Act from Upper Assam.

(3) As I have said, the time has not yet arrived for withdrawing the Act from Upper Assam at any rate for the new importation of coolies, but I do not think there would be any very great objection to the Act being withdrawn as regards renewals of contracts, though even here, a Contract Act of some form would be required, and if Act XIII of 1859 were substituted, the same would require to be modified, so as to protect the planter in the bonus made to coolies on renewal, and steps taken to ensure a more generally consistent practice, among magistrates, of the procedure thereunder.

(4) A more persistent effort to advertise the advantages to be derived by coolies from emigration to the tea districts, as there can be no question that the condition of labourers on tea gardens is far superior to the conditions prevailing in the districts from which they are recruited, and also looking to the class from which they are taken; more sympathetic action on the part of the officials in the recruiting districts; greater publicity should be given to the quicker and cheaper facilities afforded by the extension of railways in going to and returning from the tea districts, and also of the fact that, though the minimum wage is ₹5 per month, a hard-working man or woman can, during certain months of the year, earn nearly double that sum. If Sections 195 and 196 are taken away, then so far as tea gardens are concerned, the benefits of the Act are minimised considerably. It is not so much the practical as the moral effect of these sections that it is desired should be retained. Even if the Act is abolished, the moral effect of these sections will remain. It must be carefully borne in mind that though the privilege of private arrest, without a warrant, is given under these sections, the arrester must bring those arrested *at once before a magistrate* and cannot take them back to the garden without doing so; also that when a coolie absconds, the quicker the steps taken to catch him the more chance there is of success, otherwise the probabilities of arresting the coolie are lessened. In most cases a reference to a magistrate would take several days and by that time the coolie would invariably be beyond recall.

(5) I consider the withdrawal of Act VI of 1901 from the Surma Valley would not, to any appreciable extent, prejudice recruitment for Upper Assam as the class of labour required is so different.

(6) It would be a doubtful experiment to entrust all recruiting to one Association, though I would favour inducements being given to any Association having for its object the *bonâ fide* recruitment of coolies for tea gardens.

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This brings me to the second part of the Committee's Note as to the causes among others said to contribute to the general feeling against emigration to Assam.

(*a*) There can be no doubt that a great deal of misunderstanding prevails in the recruiting districts regarding the condition of the labourers in the tea districts, and this has undoubtedly had a deterrent effect on recruiting. There are, however, recent signs that these ideas are gradually dying away, and also a strong feeling is growing that the expansion of railways, and the quicker facilities of travelling, will, in a few years, greatly remove the prejudice which exists.

(*b*) The immigrants that go to the tea districts under the Act are usually those who have weighed in the balance their original homes and found them wanting, either from their own fault or other causes, and consequently do not wish to return. Many others in the years they have been labouring at tea culture have acquired new associations, new homes, and greater comfort than they ever had in their old homes. Many coolies, who had returned to their homes, have again returned to the gardens denuded by their relations of what money they possessed. It is therefore natural that the fact becoming known deters others from doing the same.

(*c*) It may be a fact that the *minimum* wage under the Act is less than that offered by other industries nearer the coolies' homes. It must, however, be remembered that the coolies recruited or suitable for tea gardens are mostly agricultural labourers, almost unfitted for any other work; that though the minimum wage is small, a good coolie can earn at times a sum to compare favourably with that given by other industries; that they are housed, looked after, and medically cared for considerably better than the coolies working at mines, on railways, or in mills. These latter advantages considerably compensate for the higher wages said to be paid elsewhere for unskilled labour.

(*d*) I am afraid it cannot be questioned, but an improvement has taken place, and it is not impossible that with the publicity given to the labour question in the tea and labour districts by your Committee, even further improvement may be reasonably expected. I would be in favour of having a close time for arkatis so as to give the more natural system of recruiting by sardars a greater chance.

I will now offer a few remarks on the measures which have been suggested to the Committee as likely to enable the Tea Industry to compete on more equal terms with industrial concerns in or near the recruiting districts.

(1) Even in the interests of the coolies I do not think it is advisable that the penal contract should be abolished, as I am satisfied that the restraint and discipline thereunder are to his advantage. Many of them like children require a guiding hand. Until the cost of recruitment is considerably reduced, I consider that it would not be fair on the planters to curtail the contract. To the thrifty industrious coolie the Act is virtually a dead letter, and at the end of his indenture, he either remains on the garden, bettering his condition year by year, or with the money he has saved, and the other possessions he has amassed, takes a piece of land and settles thereon. But there are others, who, if, at the end of their indentures, they are left to the inclination of their own will, would in all probability revert to the freedom of a gipsy life, wandering from garden to garden, instead of becoming, as under the Act, good citizens engaged, even in their humble capacity, in the development of the tea districts; there is always a possibility of time-expired coolies wandering about the Province proving a source of annoyance to officials and planters. With no regular employment it would appear only natural that time-expired coolies are likely to drift into a condition infinitely worse than that which prevailed prior to their recruitment, and it is for coolies such as these that local Act contracts are necessary.

(2) This is a serious question and one that was very fully threshed out when Act VI of 1901 was under consideration. The conclusion then come to was that the pay of a coolie was not inadequate for the task performed. It is true that the minimum wage sounds small, but if consideration be given to the general care that is taken of the coolies, the way they are housed and medically attended to, the comparison with other industries is not unfavourable to the Tea Industry. It must also be remembered in making a comparison that the time the coolie is engaged in earning the statutory wage is much less than if he were employed at industrial concerns nearer his home, and that by *ticca* work he can earn nearly double the wage. The present system gives a good coolie an advantage. It might have some effect if the sum in the contract were stated as the average for the whole term, and also if the average *ticca* pay that a coolie could earn were made clearer. It would not be a popular move to increase the task. In fact, of recent years managers have found it advisable to reduce the same as leading to a more contented and healthy condition on the gardens.

(3) There would be no difficulty about granting more casual leave at certain seasons of the year, but at other times with a pressure of work it would be difficult. It is the same in all kinds of industries. The tendency is, as the capabilities of coolies are being more understood, to make the life easier for them. It is found to be beneficial, and I daresay you have heard that the percentage at daily work on estates is now appreciably less than it was some years ago. They are now only required to work once a day, and if a coolie does his work

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honestly he has plenty of leisure for his own affairs, and little or no restraint is placed on his movements. In many cases this is not to his advantage, as often his spare time is occupied in spending his spare coin at the nearest grog shop, so many of which are unfortunately countenanced by Government.

(4) This would certainly be a move in the right direction. If Government were to grant land on easy terms to the tea gardens for the purpose of settling coolies, it would be of material assistance in solving the labour question. It is stated on high authority that "by far the most important factor in the growing prosperity and commercial importance of the Province of Assam, has been the remarkable expansion of the Tea Industry", that "many of the persons, who go to Assam to work on tea gardens, afterwards settle down there as cultivators and so help to bring under the plough its vast areas of fertile waste land". This being so, it is only fair that the Tea Industry should be allowed every facility for settling labour to their own advantage, while at the same time furthering, what has been the earnest wish of every Assam official, the increase of the population in the Province and assisting in its development. If this suggestion is acted on, it ought to be given a fair trial, without any interference from Government either in giving land, except through garden managers, or making advances to time-expired coolies for the purpose of taking up land. Already many concerns have successfully adopted the idea, and it only now requires the help of Government to make it more universal.

(5) The offer of repatriation is already in vogue on many gardens. It is not often taken advantage of for reasons I have already stated. On some gardens casual leave has been freely given, but neither has this been a success, as the coolies return, in most cases, having spent the money which took them years to gather, and they have virtually to begin life again. It is therefore not a popular concession. Any coolies, who wish to return to their country during the term of their contract, can do so as sardars, and if the vexatious regulations, which tend only to frighten coolies, were removed, many of the difficulties at present attending sardari recruiting would be removed, and the natural flow of labour to Assam would be increased. It is a significant fact that of late years the number of sardars, who do not return at the end of the recruiting, has been much reduced, and during a recent visit to Assam I have heard of sardars returning who have been lost sight of for years, in some cases bringing with them some coolies as a peace offering.

(6) I think it would be a move in the right direction if the free contractor system under Section 92 of the Act were entirely abolished. It is under this system that most of the abuses arise. Coolies are recruited in the dark not knowing where they are going, without the help of friends or relations, and in some cases family relations are broken in the most arbitrary manner to suit the pockets or other advantage of the contractor.

In conclusion, I may be allowed to make a few general remarks or suggestions which might tend to remedy the present state of affairs.

In the first place, I would be in favour of repealing Chapter IV of the Act and allowing sardari recruiting in all districts under Chapter V. To a sardar, and more so to the less enlightened coolies, the formalities to be gone through in the recruiting districts are a great deterrent. Some sections might be retained sufficient for the welfare of the sardar and his recruits until they arrive on the garden. If the various railways could be got to take charge of the coolies at the point of departure and be responsible for them until delivered at the station nearest the garden, the danger of absconding from ignorance, or of being *phuslaoed*, would be minimised. I believe this has been tried with much success in Southern India.

If the Act is retained in its entirety or even so much of it as may be considered necessary, it would greatly tend to help emigration to the tea districts if the officials in the recruiting districts were given leave to visit gardens and see for themselves the condition of affairs, and convince them that they were not helping in a system which has even the "taint of slavery".

4TH JUNE 1906.

No. 240.—MR. J. C. ARBUTHNOTT, C.I.E., I.C.S., *Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts Division.*

I have served in Assam since 1883, chiefly in the Assam Valley and Hill districts. In 1903 I was in Sylhet and I have been Commissioner of the Surma Valley and Hill districts since October 1905.

If there is to be uncontrolled recruiting for the Surma Valley, Act XIII contracts should not be allowed for more than a year, and it would be better still if there were no such contracts at all. Those who advocate the recruitment of labour for the Surma Valley without any restrictions, appear to forget that the system under which labour is employed in the Duars differs radically owing to the absence of labour laws. However, I look forward to a movement towards free labour.

If Act VI is repealed Act XIII contracts will probably be divested of some objectionable features. At present there is a tendency to assimilate contracts under Act XIII to Act VI

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contracts. Matters will never be on a thoroughly satisfactory basis until a free labour system is established. To limit Act XIII contracts to a year would mean legislation unless free labour is introduced at once. No doubt there would be considerable opposition to the repeal of Act XIII in the Surma Valley. Cases under Section 492, Indian Penal Code, are very rarely instituted because the section provides no means of enforcing a contract and the punishment of a defaulter is of less importance than specific performance. My opinion after visiting all the tea districts is that free labour, as it obtains in the Duars, is better for everyone concerned, including the planter. Unless you have perfectly free labour I do not see how you can allow contractors to recruit without control.

I consider that it would be a step in the right direction if the right of private arrest and local Act VI contracts were abolished for the Assam Valley. I am of opinion that the power of arrest should never have been given. The abuse of it has led to several discreditable cases in the last few years. I think that a coolie when illegally arrested often resorts to a false charge against his employer. The coolie is by no means a free agent as to whether he renews his contract or not; the position of a manager may often depend on whether he can get his coolies to stay on and renew. It is deserving of consideration whether the contract of husband and wife should not automatically terminate together.

I think that if Act VI were repealed some gardens in the Assam Valley might have to close or give better terms to their coolies. To repeal the Act at once in the Upper districts might tend to disorganize labour at first, but I also think that things would very soon settle down. It is recognized that Act VI must go, but it is only a question of time. I would therefore fix a date for it to expire in the near future. Under a free labour system everyone would soon find his own level. I should be inclined to recommend the abolition of Act VI at the end of three or four years from the present date. It is an anomaly to retain an elaborate special law for four districts in the whole of India. I do not think that the Ceylon system is practically free labour.

The ordinary inspection of a tea garden is in my opinion of very little use. The inspection of an unhealthy garden by an experienced Civil Surgeon is, however, valuable. In Cachar many gardens are now only inspected every two years. If Act VI were repealed and a manager was unwise enough to refuse to carry out the suggestions of a Civil Surgeon, presumably the courts would decline to enforce Act XIII contracts on his garden; and thus his coolies would become practically free.

I have served in all the Assam tea districts as Deputy Commissioner at one time or another. The coolie is a freer man and is much better treated than he was twenty years ago. I think that the coolie in the Surma Valley is freer than the coolie in the Assam Valley; the number of complaints of detention is far fewer in the former and is decreasing yearly.

I do not think that there is a strong call for amending Act XIII. It works fairly well in practice and might be left as it is for the present. There were difficulties in an Assam district three or four years ago, as the contracts expressed in terms of one or two years could not be construed to mean 313 or 626 days. I should be averse to undertaking fresh labour legislation.

I think it might be considered whether the law should not provide for the summary recovery of the cost of importing a labourer by the importer, from any one employing the labourer within a certain period. Preferably it is a matter which should be left to Association labour rules. Colonization schemes have been persistently opposed since Mr. Quinton's proposals 16 or 17 years ago. I think the opposition has been short-sighted, and that had a satisfactory scheme been evolved, the planting community would be in a better position now as regards labour and the labour question generally.

11TH JUNE 1906.

No. 241.—MR. A. J. COOPER, *Traffic Manager, Assam-Bengal Railway*, kindly gave the Committee an interview at Shillong. In amplification of his letter No. 16320, dated 16th May 1906, the following is a summary of the conclusions come to with regard to the issue of cheap tickets to tea-garden coolies.

The Traffic Department of the Assam-Bengal Railway propose to recommend to their Board that cheap third class return tickets at one pie per mile should be issued to all tea-garden coolies, returning on a holiday to their native districts during the slack period of the year, on their handing to the station master a certificate from their employer to that effect. These tickets would be available for garden sardars proposing to return within the three-monthly period. Any garden sardar who is likely to remain away for longer than that time, would have to use a credit note and pay 1½ pies per mile according to the system recently introduced.

It is considered that for new coolies returning with garden sardars the credit note system should be maintained. The Committee mentioned to Mr. Cooper a suggestion that the names

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of such coolies might be endorsed on the return half of the three-monthly ticket, which would be signed by the station master of the station of return. It was thought best not to complicate matters by introducing a double system, and for the present at least the issue of credit notes was considered to be the best and most practicable plan.

To any coolie leaving a garden on the expiration of his term of service and producing his discharge certificate, a ticket will be issued to his home at a fare of 1½ pies per mile. The Railway Company cannot undertake to issue a cheap ticket to any one who cannot produce a discharge certificate. Such coolies must pay the ordinary fare.

Mr. Cooper showed the Committee the plan of the style of third class bogie carriage, which the Assam-Bengal Railway intends building for tea-garden coolie traffic only. There will be latrine accommodation at one end of the carriage and a kitchen and travelling shop at the other. An ample supply of water will also be provided. A vendor will travel in the train, and will supply cooked meals, if required, or dry rations at rates to be fixed by the Railway Company. The food will be supplied either for cash or on the production of food coupons, which can be obtained at Goalundo from the Company's coolie agent by the person travelling in charge of the coolies. The Railway Company will place trustworthy men of their own as conductors in the coolie carriages, to see that the coolies receive every convenience.

The Committee having drawn the attention of Mr. Cooper to the bad lighting arrangements at Chandpur Railway Station, he explained that the Railway Company propose to provide an electric or other suitable installation at that place.

No. 16320, dated 10th May 1906.

From—The Traffic Manager, Assam-Bengal Railway,

To—Secretary, Assam Labour Enquiry Committee.

1. I am aware that any matters pertaining to the free and unrestricted transport of tea-garden coolies to and from Assam will have your attention, and therefore take this opportunity of placing before the Committee the views and a brief history of the labour of the Assam-Bengal Railway in this connection.

2. From the enclosed Circulars you will observe that this Railway has arranged with the East Indian, Eastern Bengal, Bengal-Nagpur, and Oudh and Rohilkhand Railways, to accept credit notes supplied by this Railway to all tea-garden managers who supply the same in lieu of money to their garden sardars proceeding to recruit coolies. A separate credit note is given for each coolie, so that the sardar at such places, as Bilaspur, for example, merely hands to the ticket clerk at the station one credit note for each coolie travelling with him, and receives in return a ticket. The Railway issuing the ticket sends the credit note to this Railway, which recovers the sum from the garden manager, and credits the Railway or Railways concerned. By this arrangement tea gardens avoid running any risk of losing money which they would otherwise have to entrust their sardars with, and the Railways concerned have no trouble in realizing the amounts due to them under this head.

3. In the matter of tea-garden coolie fares, this Railway was the first to quote the minimum fare, *viz.*, 1½ pies per mile ; and the East Indian Railway followed. All the other Railways charge the ordinary fare in force for third class passengers over their respective systems. I believe, however, that it is probable the Bengal-Nagpur and Eastern Bengal State Railways would also reduce to the minimum, if the Labour Committee expressed a desire that they should do so in order to increase the flow of labour to Assam, and thus assist the Tea Industry which has had many vicissitudes to contend with lately. Apart from the question of the success or otherwise of the Tea Industry, the fact that this industry is maintained and carried on by Englishmen who form the best material in India for the defence of the Empire, and who are almost to a man ardent volunteers, should earn for them sympathetic treatment from Government and the Railways.

4. I should like to see the tea-garden coolie carried from his home to the garden at the minimum fare throughout the journey, *i.e.*, 1½ pies per mile.

5. I would propose, in addition, in the interests of the coolie, that any and every tea-garden coolie who has been working in Assam in tea gardens, should be allowed to return to his home at such a reduced fare as would enable him to proceed on twenty to thirty days' leave during the slack period of the tea season, or as would allow him to return to his native village on retirement from service at reduced rates. For all such coolies going back to their homes, a charge of 1 pie per coolie per mile should be made. The Railways may not be in a position to quote so low a rate as this, but there is no doubt the Railway Board, who we know are business men, would give the matter due consideration if the Labour Committee addressed all Railways on the subject, and requested them to agree to this rate being charged. By the adoption of this rate for return coolies, I feel convinced that coolie recruiting in the future would be made easy, as returned coolies would make known to their friends and relations that, under the proposed revised rules and rates, the journey to or from Assam had been so reduced that it would always be possible for a coolie to return to his native village and be with his relatives and friends, within a few hours and at the expense of a few rupees. The present feeling of horror and dread with which the inhabitants of Chota Nagpur look upon emigration to Assam would no longer exist, and that feeling

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of freedom, which all who are interested in the coolie would like to see exist, would be engendered, which I regret to say is impossible under the present system and method of recruitment.

What does this nominal fare mean? It means that a coolie can travel 1,000 miles for R5-4.

Take a few examples :—

	Mileage	Fares @ 1 pie per mile.	Approximate time on journey.
		Rs. A. P.	
From Srimangal, in Sylhet, to Bilaspur	820	4 4 0	2½ days.
„ Silchar, in Cachar, to „	911	4 12 0	3 „
„ Mariani, in Sibsagar, to „	1,119	5 13 0	3½ „
„ Nazira, „ „ to „	1,150	6 0 0	3½ „
„ Tinsukia, in Lakhimpur, to „	1,216	6 5 0	4 „
„ Dum Duma, in „ to „	1,231	6 7 0	4 „

6. In addition to the above, I would strongly advocate return third class coolie tickets being issued for two single fares. This would be an advantage to coolies proceeding on leave for a limited period. And this brings me to refer to the question of leave. In order to prove to the coolie that he is quite free to go and come as he pleases, I think it would be a good thing if there were a system of leave introduced by which a coolie could be allowed to go to his home once a year for a month, or say, for twenty days. This, of course, is a very weighty question, but I believe it is possible to produce a scheme by which such leave could be arranged for, and at the same time prevent the planter from suffering a loss if in any case a coolie did not return ; the loss, if any, might for instance be borne by a General Fund so that an individual owner or garden would not lose. I am sure the planting community themselves could devise a workable scheme so as to admit of this leave being given the coolie. On returning from leave he might have, say, half of the return fare refunded to him. These are merely general remarks on the subject of leave, but you will I feel sure perceive what I wish to be considered.

A coolie from the outmost limits of Assam should be able to reach Bilaspur in 4 days, and from Sylhet in 2½ days. It would pay any planter who did not agree to the leave as proposed, to send monthly a few of his oldest and most trusted coolies backwards and forwards between the garden and their homes, to keep up a connection between the coolies on the garden and their relations in the villages of Chota Nagpur. They could take letters from all such coolies as desired to communicate with their friends, and go to the different villages, and besides delivering letters, see and answer all questions put by the relations ; this would help a great deal in promoting emigration to the tea gardens.

The Assam-Bengal Railway is doing all it can to encourage the free and unrestricted travelling of tea-garden coolies. Carriages for next recruiting season will be running from Chandpur to Tinsukia through the heart of Assam; in such carriages, which will be of the bogie type, there will be a vendor's stall for dry and cooked food, drinking water laid on, and at the extreme end a native lavatory, so that the coolie can have all he requires on the journey ready at hand.

No. 16651, dated 14th May 1906.

I mus tapologise for troubling you again.

There is one point which I omitted to mention in my letter No. 16320 of the 10th instant. Government should, in my opinion, make it compulsory by legislation for the garden coolie to be forwarded to his destination by the quickest route, be it rail or steamer.

Note on transport of tea-garden coolies from the recruiting districts to tea gardens in Eastern Bengal and Assam, more specially for the gardens situated in the Surma and Brahmaputra Valleys.

The question of facilitating the transport of tea-garden coolies has been receiving the attention of tea proprietors at Home, and their solicitors, Messrs. Sanderson, Adkins, Lee and Eddis, have sent several communications to the Railways and other bodies in this country, with a view to devise a simple method freed from all encumbrances to facilitate the journey of the coolies to the gardens.

Mr. Arbuthnott, in his able note on the question, refers to the tin ticket system of Ceylon, and this system is considered a sound one by many managers of gardens. On studying the system it appears to be cumbersome and not adapted to the conditions prevailing here.

First.—The sardar who recruits in Southern India on the South Indian or Madras Railway has to buy railway tickets from the place where the coolie is recruited to the coolie depot at Tataparai, a railway station about 20 miles from Tuticorin.

Second.—From Tataparai the coolies are taken charge of by Government, and a tin ticket is issued by Government for each coolie, so that he may be able to obtain transport and food over the Railways and by British India Steamer. At Tataparai railway tickets and steamer tickets for the combined journey are issued to Colombo, where again the Ceylon Railway issues fresh tickets to destination.

Shillong.

This is the system in force. Now it may be taken as an accepted fact that Government would not care to undertake this work.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of this Province, in dealing with the question of coolie recruiting, has clearly evinced a desire to help the Tea Industry in removing all unnecessary restrictions on the part of Government, and it would be too much to ask Government to undertake to work the tin ticket system, when Government as well as the tea proprietors are agreed the work of coolie recruiting should be free and untrammelled.

It was proposed during the late Railway Conference to hold a meeting in Calcutta at which the General Traffic Manager, East Indian Railway, the Traffic Superintendent of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, the Traffic Manager of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, the Managing Director, Acting Agent and Traffic Manager of the Assam-Bengal Railway were to be present, but on the only day it could be held, it was found that the General Traffic Manager of the East Indian Railway had to proceed to Allahabad on urgent affairs, and the Traffic Manager of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, who is deeply interested in the matter, was also away at Khargpur. The Manager and Traffic Superintendent of the Eastern Bengal State Railway and the Managing Director, Acting Agent and Traffic Manager of this Railway met and discussed the question. All these gentlemen were extremely anxious to do all in their power to meet the views of the tea proprietors.

The proposals put forward by the Assam-Bengal Railway are simple in their application and devoid of all encumbrances when booking coolies to tea gardens.

First.—The sardar on starting from the garden to recruit coolies obtains a license from the civil authority of the district where the tea garden is situated; he goes to the nearest railway station and buys his ticket for the journey. The garden manager can either supply the sardar with money to buy his ticket, or he may issue a credit note, Form X, to the sardar, and the station master will give a ticket to any station in India in exchange for the credit note.

The garden manager will supply credit note forms to the sardar for the return journey of himself and coolies, but this is dealt with under the second clause below. This is all that is required to be done at the station where the sardar starts for the recruiting districts.

Second.—On arrival at the recruiting districts the sardar will report himself not later than three days after his arrival to the nearest magistrate or civil authority, and report his arrival and intention to recruit coolies in the district. After the sardar has recruited coolies, he takes them to the magistrate and gives their names and addresses, or he can send a letter to the magistrate giving the number of coolies he has recruited and their names and addresses. This is the system under Section 90 of the Act, but the tea-garden managers are much more acquainted with the rules under Section 90 than the undersigned.

After the sardar has complied with Section 90 in obtaining his license, and before the sardar leaves the garden, he will be supplied by the manager with the necessary number of credit notes, Form X, to cover the return journey of himself and the coolies he is likely to recruit and return with. A sample form is enclosed, and it will be observed that a separate form for each coolie is issued. The question of issuing one form to cover any number of coolies was considered, but owing to many cogent reasons this idea has been given up. All that the superintendent or manager of the garden has to do is to enter the name of his garden, district and nearest railway station, and to fill in the railway station and railway he is addressing, with a request to the station master that one coolie be sent from that station to his station *viâ* Goalundo and Chandpur.

The manager not knowing how many coolies may be recruited can act on the safe side, and issue to one sardar six, or ten, or twenty credit notes, if he chooses. The sardar must be led to understand that each credit note must be given for each coolie in order to get a ticket to destination, and the same credit note, Form X, will also be used for a minor or child under twelve years travelling at half the fare; the station master in the certificate at bottom will show whether he has issued a half ticket.

Third.—The Assam-Bengal Railway Company are responsible to all other railways for their proportion of the fares, and the Assam-Bengal Railway Company will hold all tea-garden superintendents and managers, whose credit notes are used, responsible for the prompt payment of the fares on bills issued from time to time by the Assam-Bengal Railway Company.

If credit notes are placed in the hands of station masters and tickets are issued, the garden superintendent or manager shall be bound to honour such credit notes even although the coolie or coolies never reach their destination.

The risk attendant is exactly the same as if the sardar paid cash and bought the tickets. If the coolie decamps the fare is lost and no extra risk is entailed by the above provision.

Endeavours have been made to outline the system proposed, and it is expected that the results will be satisfactory.

The arrangements indicated in the foregoing paragraphs will come into effect at once at all coolie-booking stations on the East Indian, Bengal-Nagpur, and Eastern Bengal State Railways. Books of credit notes, Form X, may be obtained on application to the undersigned. All garden superintendents and managers are requested to note, that when submitting applications for credit note forms, they should intimate their acceptance of the conditions contained in the proposals, more especially those under "Third".

The East Indian Railway and the Eastern Bengal State Railway have met the views of the tea-garden interests in attaching a through carriage daily between Asansole and Goalundo

solely for the convenience of tea-garden coolies, and information is received that the result is so successful that a second or additional carriage is likely to be attached for coolie transit. **Shillong.**

The 1st March 1906.

In continuation of the last paragraph of the note, dated the 1st March 1906, issued by the undersigned as to the above, it is hereby notified that the arrangements mentioned therein will also come into effect at once for all coolie booking stations on the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway.

TRAFFIC MANAGER'S OFFICE,
Chittagong, 3rd April 1906.

A. J. COOPER,
Acting Traffic Manager.

Form X.

No. 2070.

ASSAM-BENGAL RAILWAY COMPANY, LD.

TEA GARDEN COOLIE CREDIT NOTE.

Name of Garden_____

Full Address_____

Nearest Station_____

To

THE STATION MASTER,

Station_____

Railway_____

Issue third class ticket for one tea-garden coolie or sardar or peon-in-charge to sardar or peon-in-charge named_____ from your station to_____ station on $\frac{\text{Assam-Bengal Railway}}{\text{Dibru-Sadiya Railway}}$ *viâ* Naihati, Goalundo and Chandpur.

_____

Signature of Manager or Supdt. of Garden.

(Certificate to be filled up by station master or booking clerk.)

Certified that Ticket No._____ has been issued for one tea-garden coolie or sardar or peon-in-charge from_____ station to_____ station *viâ* Naihati, Goalundo and Chandpur, under above credit note rupees_____ annas_____, debitable to the Assam-Bengal Railway Co., Ld.

Signature of Station Master or
*Booking Clerk*_____
*Railway Station*_____
*Railway*_____

NOTE.—This credit note will also be used for children of tea-garden coolies; in the case of children under twelve years half fares only to be debited. This credit note to be forwarded to Auditor as cash voucher.

Shillong. *Conveyance of tea-garden coolies by rail from Chandpur to Upper Assam stations.*

The route from Calcutta or elsewhere, *viâ* Goalundo and Chandpur, is now open for conveyance of tea-garden coolies proceeding upward to tea estates in Upper Assam beyond Lumding.

2. These coolies will be treated by the railway staff with every consideration and care in regard to their comfort and safe passage along the Railway.

3. At Chandpur, Badarpur, Lumding and Tinsukia stations there are separate enclosures fixed at suitable places near the platform, where food will be provided.

4. Coolies, when sent off from Chandpur, will be placed in separate compartments of third class carriages and kept quite apart from the ordinary third class passengers.

5. The carriage or carriages into which the coolies are placed at Chandpur will be through carriages, that is, carriages booked to run through with vacuum brake all the way to Tinsukia.

6. An European Inspector has been deputed to travel over the line and will supervise all arrangements connected with the forwarding of tea-garden coolies.

7. An agent of the Assam-Bengal Railway has been placed at Goalundo and will supply food coupons for the journey at the following rate :—

Three annas for a cooked meal for each coolie to be supplied at Chandpur, Badarpur, Lumding and Tinsukia stations. The cooked food will be supplied according to the following scale.

The scale as laid down for each meal is as follows :—

Rice †	$5\frac{1}{3}$ chataks.
Arhar Dal	1 ,,
Country vegetables	$1\frac{1}{2}$,,
Salt	$\frac{1}{4}$,,
Mustard oil	$\frac{2}{3}$,,
Onions	$\frac{1}{24}$,,
Tamarind	$\frac{1}{64}$,,
Turmeric	$\frac{1}{48}$,,
Chillies	$\frac{1}{8}$,,
Tobacco	$\frac{1}{8}$,,

8. Similar arrangements in regard to food will be made for tea-garden coolies travelling *viâ* Gauhati and food coupons will be sold by the station master, Gauhati.

† Coolies to whom rice is not supplied, will be supplied each with 4 chataks of flour instead.

NOTE.—Tea-garden coolies must be allowed to choose whatever they like. The above bill of fare simply shows what will usually be supplied, but the items may be varied or other items given to the coolies instead of the above ingredients.

TRAFFIC MANAGER'S OFFICE,
Chittagong, 24th December 1904.

JAS. STUART,
Traffic Manager.

2ND JUNE 1906.

No. 242.—MR. P. G. MELITUS, C.I.E., I.C.S., *Member of the Board of Revenue, Eastern Bengal and Assam.*

I have prepared a written statement, which I now hand in, setting forth my views on the questions referred to the Committee by the Government of India. With the exception of Annexure G to Appendix II, the statement and its enclosures were written before reading the evidence recorded in the recruiting districts which the Committee have kindly sent me. After reading the evidence I find there are three things I did not before realise to the full: first, the very great decrease, caused by good crops, reduced population and growing competition for labour, in the classes from which labour comes to Assam, that is to say, permanent emigrants in search of a new home because they could not get a living in their own country, or for some special reason wanted to leave it; second, the intense dislike of Assam emigration among the general public of the recruiting districts, due to arkati malpractices and the permanence of the emigration, and the fact that comparatively few emigrants return home and those chiefly deserters and unsuccessful coolies who give Assam a bad name; and, third, the important part which might be played by missionaries in Assam labour-supply and colonisation. Most of them seem disposed to assist in sending their converts to Assam, provided they are satisfied as to the conditions prevailing here. And I note that the evidence of every missionary who has been to Assam speaks of the improved condition of the emigrant native Christians here both on tea gardens and in outside bastis.

I think that the evidence shows that with better recruiting arrangements probably more labour could be got than comes at present.

Shillong.

There seems to be much misunderstanding among the general public of the recruiting districts on the following points :—

First, as to the classes of emigrants who come to Assam. Temporary emigrants elsewhere for the sake of the wages are confused and compared with permanent emigrants to Assam in search of a new home.

Secondly, as to the wages of tea coolies. It seems to be supposed that they receive much less than they really get.

Thirdly, as to what becomes of the emigrants. It is not known on what a large scale they are settling to cultivation and other business in Assam.

The remedies proposed in the recruiting districts—such as short contracts, higher wages, repatriation, leave home—seem to me to a great extent to proceed from this misunderstanding. These remedies and also the promise of land for cultivation, I admit, may be tried with advantage by planters in the Surma Valley and in parts of the Assam Valley, where there is at present not much difficulty about retaining labour, and no great necessity for importing much. If successful, their use will gradually extend. But I do not think the system should be altered on these lines. The system should, I think, be such as is suitable to permanent immigration carried out by estates which require to import much labour. The Assam Valley cannot compete successfully with other and nearer industries for temporary labour, but with its sparse population and large area of fertile land awaiting reclamation, it offers advantages to the permanent emigrant superior to those offered by other places in India to which emigrants of the tea coolie class go.

The main remedies, in my opinion, are, first, improved recruiting arrangements. If the recruitment is to be sardari, it must be free, that is to say, unregistered. If registered recruiting is insisted on, a suitable system of professional recruitment must be found. Secondly, correction of the mistaken ideas which exist in the recruiting districts on the points mentioned. This would be the duty of the Assam officer who I propose should be deputed to the recruiting districts each season. He might begin by placing the true facts before the officers and missionaries, and gradually take such steps as he may find practicable for reaching the people.

I should like to point out that the birth-rate on tea gardens is higher than is generally supposed and than the tea garden registration shows. This may be inferred from the proportion of children among the tea-garden labour force. In 1901 children under 16 were 38 per cent. of the total labour force. The normal proportion of children under 16 among the general population would be about 44 per cent. (according to Mr. Hardy's Memorandum on the Indian Census statistics). The normal Assam birth-rate outside tea gardens—I mean the actual, not the registered, birth-rate—would be not far short of 50 per 1,000. Among the new emigrants to Assam in the period 1891 to 1900, the proportion of children under 16 emigrating had been less than 26 per cent. Similarly in 1891 children formed 38 per cent. of the labour force, while they were only 25 per cent. of the emigration of 1881 to 1890. In 1881 children were 35 per cent. of the labour force, but only 20 per cent. of the emigration between 1875 and 1881. I can give the figures for 1891 to 1901 in detail. At the beginning of 1891 the labour force numbered 408,140, with 38 per cent. of them children. Between 1891 and 1900, 594,286 emigrants were imported to the gardens with less than 26 per cent. children. There was a net loss in the decade by excess of deaths over births on the gardens (as registered) of 50,790. During the decade nearly 300,000 persons (as estimated from the returns) left the tea gardens, of whom over 90,000 were children. In reality, the number of adults leaving the gardens must have been less than this because there were probably some new additions by local contracts which cannot be estimated, and possibly the loss by excess of deaths over births may have been larger than the registration shows; but the proportions mentioned may pass for the present purpose. At the beginning of 1901 the labour force was 662,471, with 38 per cent. children. The results may be stated thus in round figures:—

	Total number.	Percentage of children.
1. Population of 1891	408,000	38
2. Imported 1891—1900	594,000	26
	1,002,000	
3. Lost by excess of deaths over births (as registered)	51,000	
	951,000	
4. Left the gardens (rough estimate) . . .	289,000	30
5. Remaining in 1901	662,000	38

I am unable to estimate on these materials what birth-rate on the tea gardens these figures would represent. It must have been well over 40 per 1,000 a year. I do not say that this is a high birth-rate, but it is higher than tea gardens are ordinarily given credit for. The proportion of persons of reproductive age is no doubt greater on tea gardens than among the general population. On the other hand, the initial birth-rate among new emigrants, for the reasons explained in paragraph 6 of my Appendix II, is low. Between 1901

Shillong.

and 1905, which has been a period of short emigration, the proportion of children to total labour force has risen from 38 to 40 per cent. Tea-garden births have exceeded deaths in this period.

The tea garden death-rate is high. But it is only the mortality among new emigrants that is high, and that too is forced up by bad batches among contractors' coolies. We have nothing with which to compare the mortality of new emigrants. If separate figures for new emigrants could be got for the Duars a comparison could fairly be made.

In Appendix I, I have endeavoured to estimate the ex-coolie population outside tea gardens. The object of the Appendix is to show that emigrants to Assam do not mysteriously disappear, but can all be reasonably accounted for. I admit that the materials here are uncertain, because there are so many assumptions and so much give-and-take between the different classes of coolies. If any one wished to reduce the estimated ex-coolie population by 50,000 or so, the materials would not enable me to object. It is for this reason that I prepared Annexure G to Appendix II which deals only with foreign-born tea coolies and ex-coolies. These figures are much less uncertain because the estimates for the population of 1881, 1891 and 1901 have been prepared on much the same plan and, if they are over-estimates, there is much the same degree of over-estimation throughout. A difference of some thousands in the different periods would not materially affect the results. The assumed population of 1871, the starting point of the comparison, is certainly an over-estimate, since it allows for 60,000 foreign-born tea emigrants outside tea gardens in 1871, whereas the number for 1881 is under 43,000.

I should like to explain in further detail the view in paragraph 16 of my statement in answer to question A that, as compared with the Duars, there is not a short supply of labour in the Assam Valley. Both in Assam and the Duars the labour force reached its highest point in 1900. The Assam Valley adult labour force was 257,207 on 1st July 1900. It dropped to 239,958 on 1st July 1902, but has since been rising and stood at 254,248 on 1st July 1905. In the 1905-06 season there has been better recruiting owing to the scarcity and the strength on 1st July 1906 is certain to exceed that of 1900.

For the Duars, I have figures for two groups of gardens which I show to the Committee, but the names of which I do not wish to record formally. In group A, with an acreage of about 8,000, the total coolie force dropped from 13,663 in August 1900 to 9,634 in August 1903, and then rose slightly to 9,925 in 1904. The actual working strength in August dropped from 0·88 per acre in 1900 to 0·60 in 1904. In group B, with 1,936 acres, the labour force on the books dropped from 3,187 on 1st July 1900 to 2,360 on 1st July 1904, and the working strength in July from 1,654 in 1900 to 1,137 in 1904, or 0·59 per acre. Even assuming for the sake of argument that these results are worse than in the Duars generally, it is I believe admitted that the Duars labour force dropped considerably after 1900. It is clear from Mr. Arbuthnott's report that at the time of his enquiry (beginning of 1904) the labour force was much short of the 1900 strength. Further the Duars working labour force drops each year in July, August and September, just at the time when most labour is required, while the Assam labour force gains at this time of the year from the employment of local labour. The actual working strength for September 1905 was over 1 per acre in the Assam Valley. Probably the Duars average would not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ per acre. I am told there has been good recruiting for the Duars this year and the strength of the year will reach or exceed that of 1900. From all I can learn, under the Duars system the labour force is subject to great fluctuations. It gets a better supply of labour in times of good recruiting, but it loses more in bad years. The Assam system has, I think, stood the strain of adverse times from 1901 much better, and this in spite of a severe handicap in the upsetting of its recruiting arrangements after Act VI was passed. This result has not been obtained at the expense of the coolie. The health of the labour force has been generally good, births have exceeded deaths, and some thousands of coolies a year have passed out from the gardens to the bastis. There has been an increase since 1901 of about 40,000 acres in the area of Government land settled direct with the coolie population in the Assam Valley, exclusive of increases in their cultivation as sub-tenants.

There is now an available labour force of about 250,000 or 260,000 workers in the Assam Valley. This is sufficient to get on with supplemented by occasional basti labour, but a larger force is desirable in order that the coolies may have more leave. In certain places basti labour is not procurable. According to the September returns the labour force turned out to work, on the average, 21 days in the month. As many of the coolies must have been absent on cultivation leave for several days together, the number remaining on the garden must have turned out to work more days than 21. To provide for the grant of sufficient leave, I think there ought to be a force of 300,000 workers, or about $1\frac{1}{2}$ per acre. On this basis, some 40,000 or 50,000 more workers are required. I should not like to see a resident labour force of more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ workers per acre, as there would be difficulty in providing them with work and sufficient wages in the slack months. As time goes on and population increases, more basti labour will be available. The Assamese, with certain exceptions, have not been required to work on tea gardens so far, because they have enjoyed an excess of the means of subsistence, and also because a good deal of the tea coolies' wages have come into their pockets in return for produce. Both these advantages are diminishing with growth of population. In some places where population is beginning to press on means of subsistence, ordinary Assamese villagers are coming in to work. The settled ex-coolie population is also increasing rapidly. As their numbers increase and the children grow up, they will form a valuable source of labour supply.

Shillong.

I think that if a number of missionaries in the recruiting districts were invited to come to Assam as guests of the Province and to inspect the tea gardens and the bastis inhabited by time-expired settlers, that would do much to do away with unfavourable impressions of the Province.

I do not see how absolutely free recruiting outside the Act can be allowed for the Surma Valley without abuses arising in connection with recruitment for both the Surma Valley and the Assam Valley. To prevent free arkati recruiting, a notification under Section 3 against Sylhet and Cachar would have to be applied to the recruiting districts, and along with this something in the nature of Section 90 recruiting would be required. The Surma Valley planters themselves want contractors controlled; but they do not seem to realise that you cannot control them without the Act or a substitute for it. If you control one class of recruiter, you must at least exercise so much supervision over the other class as to ensure against the prohibited class recruiting outside control. A certain minimum of supervision over sardari recruiting therefore becomes necessary, if you are to control the arkati, or else any arkati will be able to pass himself off as a sardar.

Similarly, if you allow uncontrolled recruiting for the Surma Valley and Lower Assam Valley, it would be impossible to prevent free recruits being passed on into the Upper Assam Valley, unless you applied a Section 3 notification against the Upper Assam Valley to Lower Assam and the Surma Valley. But the mere issue of a notification would not be sufficient. To see that the notification was enforced, you would have to police the railway and steamer routes, and also the roads between Lower and Upper Assam on both sides of the Brahmaputra, and over the hills between the Surma Valley and the Assam Valley, wherever coolies could be marched across. You would also have to police the Brahmaputra against smuggling by country boat. If I were asked to propose a measure for the express purpose of giving Assam a bad name in the recruiting districts, I could not think of anything much better than a notification under Section 3 being applied to the Lower Assam and Surma Valley districts against the Upper Assam Valley, followed, as it must be, unless the notification is to be futile, by the policing of the roads, river and railway. I cannot well imagine anything better calculated to make Assam emigration unpopular and to choke off emigrants both for tea gardens and general labour.

Even assuming that by these means you succeed in preventing free recruits being passed on to the Upper Assam districts (a result which is rendered the more difficult by the fact that Section 90 free sardari recruits from the recruiting districts must go to Upper Assam either through Lower Assam or through the Surma Valley), you have not stopped the mischief. The arkatis will still be at large in the recruiting districts to recruit free under cover of the Surma Valley and to transfer their recruits to the highest bidder, whether from the Assam Valley or the Surma Valley, and otherwise contaminate the system.

I do not think that absolutely uncontrolled recruiting can safely be allowed so long as there is any form of penal contract, Act VI, Act XIII, or Section 492, Indian Penal Code. I do not call it "free labour" if the coolie is placed under Act XIII or Section 492 contracts. Act VI gives the employer a stronger hold over the coolie because of the legal power of arrest and of the fact that one conviction does not, as in the case of Act XIII and Section 492, release the labourer from his contract. But the Act XIII or Section 492 coolie does not consider himself free. The average coolie has, I think, some *dharm* or *sharm* in the matter, combined with fear. Having taken the bonus as advance and given his agreement, he considers himself bound by it. There are methods of compulsion, apart from physical restraint and not necessarily illegal, which can be brought to bear on him to keep him to his contract. If all labour were really free, as in the Duars, I should not object to uncontrolled arkati recruiting, with a minimum of supervision over the labour system and a power of repatriation similar to Section 161 of the Act.

I produce the form of Act XIII contract referred to in paragraph 4 of my written statement in answer to question C.

I am not in favour of withdrawing Act VI from the Assam Valley. The Act is required by the planter for the control of arkati coolies. With the withdrawal of the Act the legal power of protecting the coolie would go. The Act is necessary not only directly for the protection of the coolie but also indirectly for the protection of the manager against his directors and agents cutting down sanitary and other expenditure on the labour force. The manager on the spot is generally willing to do his best for his labour force, but as you go further away dividends grow in importance. If Government can protect the manager against undue retrenchments, that is half the battle in protecting the coolie. I am of opinion that periodical inspections and the control under the Act, if sympathetically carried out, strengthen the hands of the manager. In the Assam Valley the non-Act coolies benefit by the control of the Act almost as much as Act coolies. It is not that there is probability of all sanitary precautions being relaxed if the Act were withdrawn, but that so much care would not be taken of the new coolie. Self-interest alone would not be sufficient to induce all employers to to look after their coolies. Some employers, or their controlling authorities, are short-sighted. We see occasional instances of this. I consider that for the protection of the labourer, inspections, returns and registers, and some legal means of enforcing orders, are necessary. Though a manager who puts his coolies under Act XIII is not bound legally to treat them as if they were under Act VI, the fact that if his coolies absconded, a single conviction would operate as a release, tends to limit the use of that Act in the Assam Valley to popular localities, or to old coolies who do not require much protection and are less likely to desert.

Shillong.

In recommending better sanitary supervision in respect of new coolies and children, I do not mean that these matters are neglected now by planters. The population of the principal recruiting areas has been much reduced by famine and emigration, and for many years to come we cannot expect to increase the labour force by importations from outside the Province at the same rate as before. We must therefore look to the source of supply which we have in the Province, and make additional efforts to improve the birth-rate, to keep alive the children and to acclimatise the new emigrants that we get.

I accept the suggestion that relaxations of Section 90 should be offered under Section 91 to employers recruiting through approved agencies on condition that they undertake not to place recruits so obtained under any kind of contract—Act VI, Act XIII or Section 492—till after the expiry of one year from their arrival on the garden. I assume that this concession will be allowed in all or nearly all districts to which the Act applies and that the recruiting will be really free, *i.e.*, without registration involving production of the recruit before a magistrate or detention at the depot. I also assume that the relaxations granted will be on the points specified in my answer to question E, that is, of clauses (*f*) and (*g*), and, if possible, of clause (*c*) so far as to permit a coolie on leave or a home-returned coolie, wishing to go back to the garden and to take up others, to be appointed a sardar in the recruiting district. If clause (*c*) of Section 90 cannot be so modified, a relaxation of Chapter IV may be granted under Section 91 (*b*) so as to enable the man to be appointed as garden sardar under that Chapter. I have heard frequent complaints of the difficulty of assisting back coolies on leave or home-returned coolies from the notified districts.

In accepting this suggestion I am influenced by the fact that there is intense dislike of Assam emigration throughout the recruiting districts, which, however ill-founded, we cannot afford to neglect. We must do something to remove it. An undertaking to keep the emigrant entirely free for one year would, I think, go far towards conciliating public feeling especially among officers and missionaries. It would not be worth while to pass off as sardari an arkati coolie who could not be put under contract for one year; and there would be a reasonable guarantee that arkati coolies would not be smuggled up under this concession. Government would have to trust to the honour of the employer and local agent to observe the conditions of the concession, but I think this could safely be done. There would be in reserve the power to withdraw the concession from any employer who abused it, and to cancel the local agent's license. The same power, combined with the self-interest of the employer and the general powers of control under the Act, would be sufficient to secure the good treatment of the new coolie on the garden during his first year.

If really free sardari recruiting on the above lines is allowed generally, and all unlicensed arkati recruiting is stopped, and if ordinary Section 90 recruiting is extended except where there may be special reason for disallowing it, I do not wish to press the suggestion made in recommendation (8) of my statement for a return to special local agents' recruiting. I think the action suggested by the Committee is a reasonable and fair attempt to meet the labour difficulty. If it is decided to take it, I do not recommend any change requiring legislation. I assume, of course, that the prohibition of free arkati recruiting on the condition that the coolie should remain really free for a year will be applied to the Surma Valley as well as to the Assam Valley.

Unless it is decided to undertake new legislation on the labour question, I would leave Act XIII as it is. It is still required in the Surma Valley and works satisfactorily. In the Assam Valley it is, as a rule, applied to coolies who are not likely to desert. I would not specially legislate for a clause against enticement, but if general legislation is undertaken I would recommend the insertion of such a clause. If there is to be legislation I would suggest giving special facilities for redemption of contracts by reducing the redemption rates in cases certified by the magistrate to be cases of distinct hardship. It might also be considered whether a rate on acreage, something like the tea cess, might not be substituted for the present capitation fees, to be applied, among other objects, to promoting recruiting.

If Sections 118 and 121 are withdrawn from the Assam Valley, I consider that legislation will be absolutely necessary to provide a workable local labour law. Act XIII would not be a workable substitute for local Act contracts. The safeguard in the present working of Act XIII, that is, its application chiefly to suitable areas and suitable classes of coolies, would disappear. It would have to be applied indiscriminately to all coolies, new and old, entering into local contracts. The objections set forth in my written answer to question C would apply. I do not see how the mere substitution of Act XIII for Act VI local contracts could benefit any one. It would not help recruitment, for it would soon be known in the recruiting districts that the free recruit was put under agreement on arrival. It would not help Government in protecting the new coolie, for there would be no legal power of protection. Government interference on behalf of the coolie would certainly be attended by friction, and the smooth working of the labour system be made more difficult. It would not help the planter because his legal hold over difficult coolies and probable absconders would be weakened. He would be tempted to exercise illegal pressure. Facilities for enticement would be increased. If the local contract sections are withdrawn, I consider that legislation on the lines of Appendix XV to my written statement will be necessary.

I have recorded my reasons for holding that Sections 195 and 196 should not be withdrawn. I do not think that a system of appointment of honorary magistrates would be a satisfactory substitute, because you could not appoint a sufficient number to be a real protection to the employer. On the other hand, if you appointed a large number, objec-

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tions might be raised against the system in certain quarters. Planters might not always observe the forms of law in issuing warrants, and if in any case anything went wrong in connection with the arrest of a coolie under a planter's warrant, there would be an outcry and the system might be discredited. In the event of these sections being withdrawn, however, I see no course but to appoint honorary magistrates and to allow the obtaining of warrants by telegraph, if this can legally be done.

If Sections 195 and 196 are withdrawn, and if the withdrawal had full effect in preventing private arrest, which I doubt, I think the planter would find it hardly worth while putting his labourers under the Act. He would put them under Act XIII, thus saving himself from the expense, formalities and trouble entailed by Act VI. The protection to the new coolie which Act VI gives would be weakened, and this would be a disadvantage. I do not consider that any period of limitation need be prescribed after which a warrant should not be obtainable for the arrest of a deserter. As a matter of fact, steps are hardly ever taken if a coolie has been away for any length of time.

The question of offering land as an inducement to emigrants to come to the tea gardens is a most difficult one. The planter would object that his labour supply was being interfered with if the offer were made too liberally. Although colonisation on a large scale would solve the labour question in the long run, it would not help immediately. I think the best course is to make land concessions to planters for cultivation by their coolies, and something on the lines of the proposals recently made by the Local Government would appear to be most suitable. I would not grant such concessions in areas where coolies are at present settling in large numbers on Government land. And, of course, I would not grant them where they are likely to be used for enticing or harbouring coolies. I would begin by granting them in localities which have to import a great deal of labour, but from which coolies drift away to other areas. Direct colonisation by Government is a somewhat different matter. There are large tracts of good land available in several parts of the Valley. If I had to work a colonisation scheme I would select the country on the north bank of the river between Bishnath and the North Lakhimpur border, which could be settled with Santal or other colonists. But very careful arrangements would at first be necessary for guarding the health of the emigrants and a considerable expenditure would have to be incurred. The settlers in this tract would only be within reach of a limited number of tea gardens. But if colonisation on a large scale took place, they would probably migrate for temporary tea-garden labour, like the Cacharis.

I submit for the perusal of the Committee the results of enquiries made by a Sub-Deputy Collector into the condition of some 300 families of coolie settlers. I had the enquiry made because it had been said that these settlers in the Darrang district were in a condition of hopeless indebtedness to the *mahajan*. The results show that cases of serious indebtedness are few. I had similar enquiries made in two other villages of less than 50 families each in which they were believed to be much in debt. In one of these villages heavy indebtedness was found, but very little in the other. While suggesting perusal of the whole, I put in a table* containing the entries relating to two villages. I select these two villages because they have a number of entries of the different classes of coolie settlers. I invite attention particularly to the cases of coolies who left the tea gardens with little or no capital and gradually built up their holdings from earnings in the villages. These cases illustrate the comparative ease with which cultivation can be started by emigrants in Assam. Above them are coolies of longer standing as cultivators rising to the old settlers who have acquired large holdings.

* Not published.

If the facts relating to the cultivation of coolie settlers of the *jungli* castes were known among the emigrating classes, I think that would probably help emigration in much the same way as an offer of land.

I have no objection to the daily wage being entered in the contract, but I think that the monthly wage should also be mentioned, as otherwise the idea might be created that it was daily work, that is to say not necessarily regular, and a full day's work. Recruitment might suffer from the idea that Assam wages are less than they really are. The daily wage does not represent the full earnings of an Assam coolie. The outside labourer is not guaranteed constant employment, and cannot earn his daily wage regularly. The old garden coolie on ₹5 a month is really as well off as an outside coolie with a daily wage of 5 or 6 annas. He gets regular employment, bonus, ticca, insurance against sickness. His wife and working children (if any) get the same. His work leaves him time for cultivation or other occupations by which he can add to his garden earnings. His younger children and old dependants, if any, can earn a trifle occasionally by light work. In the plucking season the whole family can pluck into the mother's basket and help to raise the ticca earnings. The new coolie is not so well off as he gets no bonus and cannot earn so much ticca until he has learnt the work, ticca being chiefly given for plucking, which requires skill. The garden coolie is really a monthly servant subject to deductions for short work. But I would enter the daily as well as the monthly wage in order to prevent the coolie being deceived into believing that he would get the monthly wage irrespective of work.

By suggesting that no coolie should be legally compellable to turn out to work more than 22 days in the month, I did not mean that there should be a month of 22 working days. I meant that the month should consist of 26 working days, as at present, but that if the coolie turned out to work for 22 days, the absentee days should not be endorseable as an addition to

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to the period of the contract. The point would require careful consideration with planters.

I do not consider that any reasonable increase in wages which the industry could afford would have much effect in improving recruitment. The wages paid are already in excess of the legal minimum, and any compulsory increase of the statutory wage would merely mean a redistribution of the earnings of the coolies between wages proper, bonus, ticca, and other heads, without an increase to the coolie in the aggregate. The daily wage could not be raised without raising the daily task. Most coolies would probably object to this, some coolies, who are not keen on earning much, because of the increase in the day's work, others because they would have less time to earn ticca.

FORM OF AGREEMENT UNDER ACT XIII.

Suggested Form of Agreement for New Coolies.

THIS CONTRACT made the day of 190 between whose description is given at foot and who is hereinafter referred to as the labourer of the one part and Manager of the Tea Estate in the district of hereinafter called the employer which term shall include the Manager for the time being of the said Tea Estate and the owner thereof witnesseth [that the employer hereby agrees to convey the labourer at the expense of the employer from his home at to the said Tea Estate and to pay for the feeding and other expenses of the labourer during the journey, the amount so to be expended by the employer being taken for the purpose of this contract to be R and to pay $\frac{\text{him}}{\text{her}}$ the monthly wage hereinafter provided and the labourer agrees to proceed to the said Tea Estate and there serve the employer as a labourer on the said estate or on any other Tea Estate of the employer in the same district for the term of three calendar years from the date of this contract] and that during the said period unless prevented by sickness or other reasonable cause the labourer will perform such daily tasks as may be reasonably assigned to $\frac{\text{him}}{\text{her}}$ and will carry out and perform all reasonable orders and directions of the employer and will not unless prevented as aforesaid absent $\frac{\text{himself}}{\text{herself}}$ from work or refuse or neglect to perform such daily tasks as may be assigned to $\frac{\text{him}}{\text{her}}$ or such other duties as $\frac{\text{he}}{\text{she}}$ may reasonably be required to perform and that the said sum of R so paid by the employer for the travelling and other expenses of the labourer in conveying $\frac{\text{him}}{\text{her}}$ to the said Tea Estate shall be deemed to be an advance legally recoverable by the employer from the labourer in respect of such breach of contract under the provisions of Act XIII of 1859 or under Section 492 of the Indian Penal Code and the employer on his part hereby agrees to pay to the labourer during the term of this contract the monthly wage of R such wage to be calculated and paid from the date on which the labourer commences to labour and to be calculated and paid accordingly to the actual number of days on which the labourer shall work and that in case there shall be no breach during the term of this agreement on the part of the labourer of the terms above mentioned the said sum of R shall at the expiry of the agreement cease to be an advance within the meaning of the aforesaid Act XIII of 1859 and the said labourer shall be released of all liability to refund or pay the same to the employer.

IN WITNESS whereof the parties have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written.

NOTE.—The above form can be adapted to the case of a labourer who is not put under contract until after he has been taken up to the tea districts at the expense of the employer by the substitution of the following for the words between [ ] *viz.*, "that in consideration of the employer having at his own expense "brought the labourer from his home at to the Tea Estate and paid for "the feeding and other expenses of the labourer during the journey at a total cost to the employer of R "and of the payment of the monthly wage hereinafter provided the labourer agrees to serve the "employer as a labourer on the said Tea Estate or any other Tea Estate of the employer in "the same district for a term of three years from the date of this contract."

Suggested Form of Agreement on Re-engagement of Old or Time-expired Coolies.

THIS AGREEMENT made the day of 190 between whose description is given at foot and who is hereinafter referred to as the labourer of the one part and Manager of the Tea Estate in the district of hereinafter called the employer which term shall include the Manager for the time being of the said Tea Estate and also the owner thereof witnesseth that in consideration of the sum of R paid and advanced to the labourer on the execution of this contract and of the monthly wage hereinafter provided the labourer hereby agrees to reside and labour on the said Tea Estate or any other estate of the employer in the same district for the term of calendar years from the date of this contract and that during the said period unless prevented by sickness or other reasonable cause the labourer will perform such daily tasks as may be reasonably assigned to $\frac{\text{him}}{\text{her}}$ and will carry out and perform all reasonable orders and directions of the employer and will not unless prevented as aforesaid absent $\frac{\text{himself}}{\text{herself}}$ from work or refuse or neglect to perform such daily task as may be assigned to $\frac{\text{him}}{\text{her}}$ or such duties as $\frac{\text{he}}{\text{she}}$ may be required to perform and that the said sum of Rs. shall be deemed to be an advance legally recoverable by the employer from the labourer and the employer shall be at liberty to proceed against the labourer in respect of any breach of contract under the provisions of Act XIII of 1859 and the employer on his part hereby agrees to pay to the labourer the monthly wage of R during the term of this contract such wage to be calculated and paid from the date on which the labourer commences to labour and to be calculated and paid according to the number of days on which the labourer shall work; and further that in case there shall be no breach during the continuance of this agreement on the part of the labourer of the terms above mentioned the said sum of R shall at the completion of this agreement or at the expiry of the term thereof cease to be an advance within the meaning of the aforesaid Act XIII of 1859 and the said labourer shall consequently be released from all liability to refund or pay the same to the employer.

IN WITNESS whereof the parties have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written.

Statement in answer to questions referred by the Government of India to the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee in Resolution No. 1384—1392-15, dated 20th February 1906. **Shillong.**

Question 1.—The general working of Act VI of 1901 in connection with emigration to the labour districts of the Upper Assam Valley.

The Assam tea industry and the labour system on which it rests have been not only an agency for the relief of emigrants on a large scale, but by far the most powerful instrument of Government for the advancement and prosperity of the Province and its people (*vide* Appendices I, II and III). They have added nearly a million to the population of the Assam Province. They have greatly increased the means of subsistence and available earnings of the people. They are developing the trade, communications and finances of the country. Over half a crore annually, or between one-third and one-half of the revenue of the Assam Province under the "principal heads," comes from the tea industry or from money earned directly or indirectly from it. The industry employs and supports some 600,000 persons of immigrant classes unable to obtain a decent living in their own country. It has given the Province some 350,000 settlers of the immigrant classes outside tea gardens and is sending them out from the tea gardens into the districts at the rate of several thousands a year. It is providing convenient and profitable markets for labour, produce and services at their own doors to hundreds of thousands of the indigenous and local population.

2. Regarding the Assam Valley separately details are given in Appendix II (summarised in paragraph 27 of that Appendix).

3. The above are undeniable benefits of the labour system. Opinions can only differ slightly as to their degree. The chief defects of the system (dealt with in paragraphs 29-33 and summarised in paragraph 32, Appendix II) are: Abuses in recruiting, formerly very serious and found in the enquiry of 1889-90, and in the Labour Commission's Enquiry of 1895-96, to be due chiefly to unlicensed professional arkatis; risk of oppression, illegal detention, extortion of agreements; collisions between planters and coolies (I mention these because importance has been attached to them, but serious cases are few relatively to population concerned); high initial mortality and low initial birth-rate (dealt with in paragraphs 6-11, Appendix II).

4. The defects described are not confined to the Assam system. Risk of oppression or illegal detention is not confined to Act VI contracts; it will exist under any indenture, or even without one. Risk of collisions will exist so long as there are direct dealings between planter and coolie, and will not altogether disappear when there is a middleman between them. Speaking generally, however, the above defects as well as benefits are most marked in the Assam system. There are other benefits and defects more marked in other systems. Every system has its good and its bad. The bad cannot be properly estimated if detached and viewed separately; it has to be considered in its relation to the whole.

5. The special advantages of the Assam system over others are:—(*a*) by giving importers of labour sufficient security for the retention of the labour imported, it facilitates organised recruiting, renders possible large initial recruiting expenditure, and thus raises the volume and permanence of the emigration above what it would otherwise have been (on this point I invite special attention to paragraphs 191-93 of Messrs. Risley and Gait's India Census Report, 1901: these remarks are so important that I need not apologise for reproducing them as Appendix IV); (*b*) as the result of the above and of the direct relations between employer and labourer, the health of the coolie is better looked after; there is better sanitary discipline and greater expenditure on lines, water-supply, sanitation, hospitals, doctors, hotel-messes, feeding of children, &c.; (*c*) as the result of the direct relations and the absence of a middleman, there is an absence of indebtedness among the coolies, the few attempts made by employers to bind them down by debt being checked by inspection; and (*d*) as a consequence of the above there is larger settlement of tea immigrants outside the gardens. By keeping alive the children and setting up coolies of inferior physique, the Assam system raises beyond what it would otherwise have been the population available for settlement. By keeping the coolies free from debt and in a position to save their earnings it increases the number able to set up for themselves in cultivation or other occupations independently of the gardens. Immigrants to Assam not only come for garden labour, but get a fresh start in life. In illustration of this, I quote in Appendix V two extracts from Sir H. Cotton's reports written before 1901.

Question A.—The causes which have rendered it difficult to secure a sufficient supply of labour.

This question can only refer to the period after 1900. Up to 1900 there was abundant immigration of labour. The immigrant labour population on tea gardens rose from about 40,000 (paragraph 45, Assam Census Report, 1881; but this is apparently an under-estimate) in 1872 to over 200,000 in 1881, nearly 400,000 in 1891 and about 600,000 in 1901, while the ex-coolie population outside tea gardens, which was practically *nil* in 1872 and very small in 1881, except possibly in Cachar, rose to about 300,000 in 1901, and must now be about 350,000. In the Assam Valley separately the immigrant labour force rose from (say) 25,000, or certainly less than 50,000, in 1872 to 350,000 in 1901; the ex-coolie population in the same period has risen from practically *nil* to 200,000 in 1901, and something not far, if at all, short of 250,000 now (Appendix I, paragraph 14). The area of Government

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khiraj (full revenue-paying) land recorded as settled direct with time-expired coolies in the Assam Valley, which was only 3,139 acres in 1880-81, rose to 23,953 acres in 1890-91, to 75,091 acres in 1900-01, and 105,299 acres in 1904-05. Since 1897 the average rate of increase in this Valley has been over 7,000 acres a year. Among the Assamese population the average *khiraj* area held is not much more than one acre per head of population; among tea immigrants, as shown by the Settlement Officer's Group Reports of the Sibsagar Sub-division, it is much less (except in Darrang). There were also in 1904-05, 22,101 acres *khiraj* land settled with "Other immigrants," much of which is sublet to tea immigrants. The figures for 1905-06 are not yet made up, but the increase in area settled with tea coolies will not be less than 9,000 or 10,000 acres. At Dibrugarh at my recent inspection, I found an increase of about 4,000 acres, and in Tezpur of 3,500 acres. There were also increases in the area shown as settled direct with "Other immigrants." The above does not exhaust the cultivation of ex-coolies; they also cultivate as sub-tenants of grant-holders, special settlement holders, and ordinary Assamese raiyats, and a few, *e.g.*, in Nowgong, in house-tax paying areas. Since 1900-01 the *khiraj* land alone settled direct with them has increased by about 40,000 acres; and this increase has not been accompanied by any practical decrease of the tea garden labour force. In this period, for the first time, in the Assam Valley, there has been natural growth of tea immigrant population both on the gardens and outside by excess of births over deaths.

2. There is no other system of coolie emigration which has given permanent results to touch the above. In paragraph 3 of Appendix II the results of emigration of labourers to other Provinces and Colonies are compared with Assam.

3. It may be that the results in Jalpaiguri are as good as in any one Assam district. It is impossible to examine this point, as we have no detailed information for Jalpaiguri and have to fall back on general impressions, which have more than once led to error in the comparison between Assam and Jalpaiguri. Emigration to Jalpaiguri, however, is not emigration to a distance, seeing that persons of the Chota Nagpur and Santal tea coolie classes have for many years been settling in large numbers in the surrounding districts for cultivation or general labour. Further, Jalpaiguri has a supply of hill labour available, and I understand that there has been very satisfactory hill recruiting in the last two seasons. The situation of the gardens in a comparatively small and compact area is, moreover, favourable to combinations of employers against enticement of labour. For these reasons, even if detailed information were available, a comparison could not fairly be made between that district and any Assam district.

4. Officers with Santal experience sometimes speak of the unwillingness of Santals to emigrate to Assam, and their willingness to emigrate elsewhere. The following are the figures of Santals according to the 1901 census:—

	Assam Districts.			Eastern Bengal Districts.	
	By caste.	By birth place.		By caste.	By birth place.
Goalpara . . .	857	1,479	Malda . . .	52,136	42,575
Kamrup . . .	647	...	Dinajpur . . .	74,101	48,591
Darrang . . .	11,161	3,463	Rajshahi . . .	4,685	6,481
Nowgong . . .	4,461	1,116	Rangpur . . .	4,696	3,843
Sibsagar . . .	19,298	8,720	Bogra . . .	4,533	1,900
Lakhimpur . . .	17,514	9,200	Pabna . . .	1,319	103
Sylhet	13,394	3,317	Jalpaiguri . . .	10,857	10,502
Cachar	10,084	2,839	Chittagong . . .	519	274

Sibsagar and Lakhimpur compare not unfavourably with Jalpaiguri, considering distance and the fact that there is a large spontaneous movement of Santals to districts adjacent to Jalpaiguri. The Surma Valley does not do so much recruiting in the Chota Nagpur plateau.

5. It follows from what has been said above that question A, when examined in the light of facts, resolves itself into three questions, so far as the Assam Valley is concerned:—

A (*1*). What are the causes of an abundant labour supply up to 1900?

A (*2*). What are the causes of falling off in labour supply since 1901?

A (*3*). Is there in reality a short labour supply compared with shortness in other tea producing areas?

A (*1*). *Causes of abundant labour supply up to 1900.*

6. The causes favourable to Assam emigration between 1872 and 1900 were:—

(1) Famine or scarcity in the recruiting districts.

(2) Free recruiting, not, however, unattended by malpractices calculated, if unchecked, to discredit emigration in the long run.

(3) Bad communications, preventing voluntary and unassisted migrations to nearer districts and industries or to earn wages by temporary labour, and thus giving an advantage to the organised recruiting and assisted emigration for tea gardens.

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(4) Smaller demand for labour for other and nearer industries.

The working of these causes is illustrated by Appendix VII. It refers to the whole Province, but the results for the Assam Valley would be much the same. Appendix VIII shows the results separately for the Assam Valley as regards adult immigration.

Between 1872 and 1900 causes (3) and (4) were gradually becoming less favourable to Assam; but causes (1) and (2) kept up the labour supply.

7. The causes unfavourable to Assam emigration between 1872 and 1900, and, in fact up to the present time are:—

(1) Distance and ignorance or fear, or absurd ideas of Assam.

(2) The agreement for a term of years.

(3) The fact that those who went to Assam gradually took to settling there and the great majority ceased to return to their native districts.

These unfavourable causes were overcome up to 1900 by favourable causes (1) and (2).

A ( ). *Causes of falling off in labour supply since 1901.*

8. The causes unfavourable to Assam recruitment after 1900 are of two kinds: *1st*, those applicable generally to all industries everywhere, and *2nd*, those applicable specially to Assam tea gardens. The general unfavourable causes have been:—

(1) The period has been one, on the whole, of good crops in the recruiting districts, disinclining the labouring classes from emigrating.

(2) Population reduced by famine and emigration in many of the recruiting areas, and brought within the means of subsistence locally available; this is a temporary cause; population will in time again outgrow means of subsistence and relief by emigration will be required.

(3) Improved communications, not only facilitating migrations for temporary labour for wages, but leading to a considerable exodus (especially from the Santal Pergannas—probably of several thousands a year) for cultivation in districts of the Rajshahi Division (Appendix VI).

(4) Increased demand for labour for other and nearer industries and Government Departments—Factories, Coal-mines, Railways, Survey Department, &c.

9. In addition to the above, there are special unfavourable causes applicable only to the Assam and Surma Valleys:—

(5) Dislocation of recruiting arrangements and restrictions upon recruiting after the Act of 1901.

(6) Unfavourable attitude of Government from 1900.

(7) Unsympathetic attitude of local officers in the recruiting districts.

10. As to cause (5), there was free recruiting of all kinds before the Act of 1901. It was decided to stop free arkati recruiting in order to prevent abuses. By way of compensation, encouragement to free sardari recruiting was promised. This has not been given. Special Local Agents' recruiting was stopped in 1901. Free arkati recruiting has been stopped over areas contributing 80 per cent of the Assam Valley, and 73 per cent. of the Surma Valley labour force, as it stood at the beginning of 1901. For four recruiting seasons free sardari recruiting was prohibited in areas contributing 32 per cent. of the Assam Valley, and 44 per cent. of the Surma Valley labour force (including Ranchi—still closed—and the United Provinces). For two recruiting seasons free sardari recruiting was prohibited in areas contributing 80 per cent. of the Assam Valley labour force. When the prohibitions were removed, the sardars had lost touch, and the system become discredited.

11. It will be seen then that of the two favourable causes which, in spite of increasing difficulties, kept up the labour supply, the first has ceased to exist from natural causes, the second by the action of Government.

12. Nevertheless the Assam Valley has not done so badly in its recruiting. It has imported 46,371 adult labourers in the three years 1902-03 to 1904-05, as compared with 106,157 in 1895 to 1897, in the height of the famine period, and 75,915 in 1892 to 1894. The Surma Valley has fared much worse. It imported only 10,647 adults in 1902-03 to 1904-05, as compared with 77,883 in 1895 to 1897—an exceptionally large number, double that of any other triennium, and 38,736 in 1892 to 1894. Appendix VIII shows the adult immigration into the Assam Valley, Sylhet and Cachar since Act I of 1882 was passed.

13. As to cause (6), I feel bound to mention the point, as it must be borne in mind in estimating causes and devising remedies. As instances may be mentioned: the proceedings in Council when Act VI was passed; the Labour Immigration Report for 1900; the controversy surrounding the wages return originally proposed in 1901. These proceedings were not calculated to correct erroneous ideas as to the wages and condition of immigrants in Assam. Subsequently: the admitted delay in extending Section 90 to different areas; the strictness, in some cases in excess of the law, applied to sardari recruiting, with the result that such recruiting which it was intended to encourage was hampered.

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14. Cause (7).—Unsympathetic attitude of local officers: At present many officers and others in the recruiting districts think—and on the evidence before them it is not surprising that they should think so—that the Assam coolie is a fraudulently recruited, overworked, underpaid, underfed, oppressed and illegally detained creature, and that emigrants go to Assam to die in the jungles and disappear mysteriously and cannot be accounted for. In this belief they are naturally opposed to Assam emigration.

15. I should explain that the views which I represent are the old Government views *plus* their natural developments according to changing circumstances. I am in no way concerned with the views of the tea industry (in the restricted sense of the interests of proprietors, shareholders and planters) except so far as the industry is an instrument of Government for the general good. As it happens, however, there is no real conflict of interests, the true interests of Government, the tea industry (in the above restricted sense), the tea coolies, the emigrating classes in the recruiting districts, the Assam population in the tea districts, whether indigenous or settled immigrant, and the country generally, are identical.

A (*3*).—*Is there a short labour supply in Assam compared with other tea-producing areas?*

16. The adult labour force per cultivated area for 1904-05 was 1·22 in the Assam Valley and 1·18 in the Surma Valley according to the returns. More labour is certainly desirable seeing that nearly all the cultivated acreage now consists of mature tea; and parts of the Assam Valley are short of labour. Taking the Assam Valley as a whole, however, the adult labour force is almost as high as ever it was (Appendix VIII). This is due largely to an increase in Lakhimpur. In Sylhet and Cachar the labour force has dropped since 1900, but since 1902-03 has remained steady with very little importation. These results would probably compare favourably with other tea-producing areas in a time of bad immigration. In Ceylon, circumstances were exceptional last year owing to the scarcity in Southern India. In Jalpaiguri, I understand, there has been a large influx of hill labour these two years. In the Assam Valley, the actual working strength for September 1905, according to the wages returns, was over one worker an acre. In the Duars, the average of adults per acre is, I believe, not known. The working strength during the rains, as I understand from Mr. Arbuthnott's report (see also Appendix XI), falls to less than ¾ worker per acre. The low importation rate of 4¾ per cent. a year necessary to maintain the labour force at strength in the Assam Valley and under 2½ per cent. in the Surma Valley (Appendix IX), is a record which probably beats any other tea area. The higher rate in the Assam Valley is due to larger settlement of coolies outside tea gardens owing to abundance of good waste land. The settlers are not lost to tea-garden labour, they are building up the labour force of the future, and many of them work on the gardens.

17. Two conclusions seem to follow from the answers to Questions I and A. First, it is a mistake to suppose, as we have all supposed till lately, that improving communications are an advantage to the Assam Valley (and I might perhaps add Surma Valley) labour supply. For each point the tea gardens gain by greater accessibility from the recruiting fields, they lose several from improved communications between the recruiting areas and other more popular labour fields—such as temporary general labour, Railways and Public Works, and nearer industries or industries offering higher wages than tea can afford.

18. Secondly, I think it clear that the solution of the Assam Valley labour problem lies in the retention of labour, as much as, or perhaps more than, in its importation. It is equally—or more—important to keep the emigrants *and to keep them alive* as to import them. In the Surma Valley the case may be different, as there is not so much good waste land left for settlement. The Assam Valley is peculiarly adapted for developing the special advantages of the existing labour system described in paragraph 5 of the answer to Question I. Owing to distance, climate and the nature of the work (tea work being heaviest in the rains) the Assam Valley tea gardens could not compete with other industries under a system depending on the volume of *annual* emigration. But they offer permanent advantages to the emigrant, and the tea gardens would, I think, gain more by permanent emigration, even if the annual volume is smaller.

19. The permanence of the immigration, however,—unless a corrective is applied—is likely to make Assam emigration unpopular in the recruiting districts. Up to the middle of the eighties many ex-coolies used to return to their homes from the Assam Valley. This statement rests on my general recollection of the old papers, but the following may be cited as evidence supporting it: Sir John Edgar's note of 1878; Assam Census Report, 1881, paragraph 45; Assam Valley General Administration Report, 1883-84, paragraph 8, cited in paragraph 25; Assam Valley Land Revenue Report, 1899-1900. Since then they have been mostly settling down here with the result—in the absence of correct information as to the facts—of making emigration more unpopular in the recruiting districts. The problem is to remove this unpopularity and at the same time retain the emigrants permanently in Assam. If either has to be risked, it is better for the Assam Valley to risk emigration than to risk the growth of locally settled labour. The remedies in my opinion are, (1) greater attention to health and sanitation—to keep alive the children and to acclimatise and set up the new emigrants, especially the weakly ones; (2) encouragement to agricultural settlements of coolies in suitable areas; (3) information to officers and others in the recruiting districts of the true facts regarding the condition, wages and settlement of coolies and ex-coolies in the Assam Valley, so that a true idea may be formed of the advantages of Assam emigration. The last point is most important.

20. In paragraph 78 of his Census Report, Mr. Allen says: "Only 195 persons born in Assam were censused in the Chota Nagpur Division—a fact which suggests that the proportion of

garden coolies who return to their native villages is small." The proportion certainly is small, but not as small as these figures would seem to suggest. We know that many more, especially Assam failures, return home. We also know that many coolies from Jalpaiguri return, yet the census figures show an equally small number of Jalpaiguri born persons in the principal recruiting districts. Thus :—

	Born in	
	Jalpaiguri	Assam
Censused in Hazaribagh	2	33
„ „ Ranchi	23	76
„ „ Palamau	5	5
„ „ Manbhum	1	36
„ „ Singhbhum	2	45
„ „ Santal Pergannas	7	66
Total	40	261

The inference is either that these figures are worthless, the birth place of children being recorded as the same as that of their parents, or, as Mr. Gait says (para. 250, Bengal Census Report, 1901), that emigrants who are married and have children seldom return home.

Question B.—Whether the time has now arrived for withdrawing the Act from these districts.

The time has not arrived for withdrawing the Act from the Assam Valley. The Act, or a substitute for it, is still necessary (1) for new coolies, especially arkati coolies, to provide against the sending up of professional "bolters," against desertions by new coolies generally; for the repatriation of the unfit or fraudulently recruited; and for the protection of new emigrants in respect of their health, work, wages and general treatment; (2) for old and new coolies alike to provide against enticement of labour by or on behalf of other employers; and (3) in the recruiting system, to regulate arkati recruitment and prevent its abuses.

2. The Assam Valley has now reached a stage at which the withdrawal or weakening of the Act Labour contract would benefit a proportion of the gardens at the expense of the others. But gardens which do most for the relief of emigrants and the advancement of the Province, *i.e.*, importers of labour, would suffer.

3. If the Act Contract were withdrawn without a suitable substitute, existing concerns would no doubt be compelled to import to keep going. But fresh capital and enterprise would be deterred. Among the sufferers would be the Assam Province, the emigrating classes in the recruiting districts and the Assam population generally. The cultivating classes in the Assam Valley have already begun to suffer from contraction of markets and fall in prices due to the labour force remaining stationary since 1900, while the cultivating population has been increasing.

Question C (1).—Whether, if the Act be withdrawn, a new enactment governing emigration into the Upper Assam Valley will be required.

A new enactment would be required, not only for emigration, but also for labour: (*a*) to control arkatis and prevent abuses in recruiting, (*b*) in respect of new coolies, especially arkati coolies, to prevent desertions and the sending up of bolters; (*c*) for the protection of new coolies and to provide for their repatriation, cancellation of agreements, etc., and (*d*) against enticement of labour.

C (2).—Whether Act XIII either in its present form or with modifications would be suitable.

2. Act XIII would be unsuitable. First, because it contains no provisions on the points specified in the preceding paragraph. It contains no provision, for instance for, the protection of the labourer. The granting of discharge certificates by magistrates to Act XIII coolies is a procedure not authorised by law which leads to much friction. Secondly, it is an uncertain law capable of different interpretations by different magistrates. A great industry should not be dependent on an uncertain law. Thirdly, it is doubtful if it can be applied to new importations, as it does not provide for initial expenses of importation counting as an advance.

2. These defects could not be satisfactorily removed by executive action. Executive orders could not legally provide for all the above points. They would not be legally binding on the courts, they would be a constant source of friction between Government and the planters (as they have been for some time in the Assam Valley), and they would place officers having to administer the labour system in an undesirable position. They would be unfair to judicial officers whom the law requires to act on their judicial discretion. Further, the element of uncertainty would not disappear, as any new head of the Administration might have his own peculiar views. There have been many abrupt changes of views following changes in heads of Governments (*e.g.*, regarding the application of Chapter V; initial registration; wages). Whether from the planter's or the labourer's point of view a great industry should not be dependent on a law with its application varying according to the ideas of individual heads of the Administration.

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3. As a practical illustration of the difficulties, the form of new Act XIII agreemen which I understand has been arranged between Government and the Surma Valley memo rialists, may be examined. I do not add it as an Appendix as it has not reached me officially and I am not sure that it is the form finally agreed upon. I assume—although this is not certain—that the High Court will uphold the legality of the form.

First, from the employer's point of view. What is there to prevent an employer at any time using another form? Absolutely nothing.

Secondly, from the officer's point of view, what is there to prevent a magistrate or Judge or the High Court from enforcing any other form of agreement which the Court considers legally binding under the Act? No executive order could prevent this.

Thirdly, from the labourer's point of view. The contract is very severe. It rests on the double basis of indebtedness and criminal penalties. No coolie could reasonably be expected to perform his contract as stated, and the practical result would be that almost every coolie would be in debt to the estate to the extent of his advance at the end of his contract period. He would escape legal liability to private arrest, but he would also lose protection as to repatriation, cancellation of contract, redemption, tasks, wages, health. Executive orders could not provide satisfactorily for these matters, and they would be certain to result in much friction. I venture to agree with Sir Ch. Elliott (extract of his opinion in Appendix X) that legal protection of the labourer is the last part of the labour system which should be given up. Sir Ch. Elliott's note is not out of date. In 1897 there were serious scandals in the Surma Valley arising from mortality among weakly emigrants attempting to find their own way back through Bengal; and poor houses had to be established in that Valley. A similar bad case among coolies from the Assam Valley was reported from Rangpur about the same time, but whether officially or in the newspapers, I cannot remember.

4. I see no objection to Act XIII, modified on the lines suggested in Appendix XV, being applied as a local labour law, *i.e.*, for time-expired or locally engaged coolies, or even, if this is insisted on as a condition of encouragement to free sardari recruiting, for new sardari recruits. But such a law would be altogether unsuitable for arkati recruiting or new arkati recruits during their first contracts. For the latter purposes Act VI, or a substitute for it, is necessary.

Question D.—This resolves itself into several questions each dealt with separately below.

D (1).—Is service in the Upper Assam tea districts unpopular?

2. Paragraphs I and 16 of the answer to question A and Appendix IX may be referred to. When the tea gardens, taken as a whole, can fill so many of the vacancies in their labour force from children growing up on the estate and from locally settled persons of the labouring classes and only require to import 4½ per cent. of their effective labour force to maintain strength, and that, too, in a country where there is so much waste land to attract away labourers, there is surely no evidence of unpopularity of *service*. Unpopularity in respect of emigration there undoubtedly is.

D (2).—What are the causes of this unpopularity?

3. The causes of unpopularity have been dealt with in paragraphs 7 to 14 of the answers to question A. Briefly stated the main causes are: (1) distance and permanence of the emigration, the majority of those returning home being Assam failures; (2) erroneous ideas as to mortality, wages, etc.; and (3) discredit of the recruiting system by arkati malpractices, combined with dislocation of recruiting arrangements after 1901. It must be remembered that Assam emigrants at no time ordinarily came from the best classes of labourers. They did not come for the sake of the wages, but in order to escape distress or destitution or (as in the case of females) unhappiness at home.

D (3).—What is the remedy for this?

4. The remedies briefly are: (1) removal of the erroneous ideas by correct information; (2) a proper recruiting system; and (3) stricter supervision over the labour system in Assam so as to remove any real causes of complaint.

D (4).—What are the abuses in connection with the present labour emigration system?

5. It must be conceded that with 650,000 labour population and some thousands of planters and native staff, there is not a conceivable abuse which—Act or no Act—may not be sometimes practised on tea gardens. The remedy is Government supervision. I think this has been recognised from the beginning.

2. In paragraphs 29 to 32 of Appendix II, I have dealt with the general question of abuses. I now deal with those mentioned in the Government of India's Resolution of 20th February 1906.

3. It is said: "Special enquiries.....demonstrated that the situation in Assam compared unfavourably with that in the other tea-producing tracts in India both in respect of the relations between employer and employed and as regards the system of obtaining labour." I would point out, with all respect, that there is no other tea-producing tract in India of any size to which the enquiries extended in which direct relations exist between planter and individual labourer. The relations elsewhere are between the planter and the coolie headman and between the headman and the coolies. The benefits as well as the defects of the two

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systems are different. Among the defects of the Assam system is a greater risk of collisions involving the planter himself. Among the benefits those mentioned in paragraph 5 of the answer to Question I. There are more relations between the planter and coolie in Assam; therefore more bad relations, but also more good ones. The bad attracts attention most. That the relations are on the whole good, has been the opinion of a series of Chief Commissioners endorsed by the Government of India in their letter No. 272—90-3, dated 5th February 1902. In paragraph 7 of that letter the Government of India expressed agreement with Sir D. Fitzpatrick's view (Labour Immigration Report for 1887, paragraph 5) that a certain number of collision cases was no evidence of bad relations generally between planters and coolies.

4. Further, there is no other tea tract in India which, in respect of magnitude of operations, conflicting interests of employers, and distance from the recruiting fields can be compared with Assam. In Darjeeling the labour force is kept up mainly by local labour or by spontaneous or slightly assisted Nepalese immigration. The Duars gardens cover a small and manageable area, and the emigration to them is hardly emigration to a distance (answer to Question A, paragraph 4). The Madras labour system is a small affair compared with Assam, the emigrants come from a short distance by road, and the emigration is annual or temporary, like our Cachari emigration. Chittagong and Chota Nagpur are very small tea-producing areas with local labour available.

5. The only tea-producing tract which can fairly be compared with Assam, or even with the Assam Valley, is Ceylon. In this comparison the advantage, except as to the recruiting arrangements, seems to be on the side of Assam. Under the Ceylon system enticement of labour appears to be prevalent. Up to 1904-05 as much as R60 advance was offered to attract local labour. In 1904-05 this amount was reduced by agreement among employers; but that was in a season of plentiful emigration owing to scarcity in Southern India, and it remains to be seen if the reduction will continue. It was estimated that 400,000 working coolies were R1,80,00,000 (18 millions) in debt. With such indebtedness, they cannot get a fresh start in life, as in Assam. Tea garden labour becomes a temporary remedy for distress at home.

6. Further, there is no other tea-producing tract in which the labour system is so closely supervised by Government, and statistics and occurrences, especially cases between planters and coolies, so carefully registered and watched. Every case of collision, however insignificant, is reported by wire to Government. Elaborate registers of complaints by and against coolies have been prescribed in recent years, and copies are sent to the Secretariat quarterly, printed and circulated. The coolies know that the magistrates are ready to listen to, and take action on, their complaints. The result is that more complaints are made, and fewer occurrences escape notice than in other tea tracts.

7. I am not aware that the term "intractable" applies to the Assam labour force. I should say that the coolies were as a rule an amenable lot, but ignorant and excitable, and easily misled on occasions, especially when they have a real or supposed grievance, by turbulent characters and mischief makers. No doubt a large proportion of new arrivals, especially those imported through arkatis, are inefficient and weakly persons who were unable to get a living in their own country. These swell the mortality returns; but how would it benefit them to be prevented from escaping from the destitution which faced them in their own districts? They would be liable to high mortality anywhere. In Assam with a greater risk of death for their first two years or so, they get the chance of a fresh start in life. The special merit of the Assam system is that these people are nursed and acclimatised and in the course of time made useful members of the labour force. Under the system in force elsewhere, the employer could not afford to do this. The acclimatised labour force is by no means an inefficient body, in some parts of the Assam Valley it contains a good proportion of fine *jungly* labour. In point of turning out to work the Assam coolie is worth 21 or 22 days in the month; the Duars coolie 18 to 20 days according to official estimates (which, however, apparently only relate to 12 gardens) or 15 days according to the Chairman of the Duars Tea Company, Mr. F. T. Verner. An extract from Mr. Verner's speech at the general meeting of the Company, 1905 (as reported in the "Englishman"), is quoted in Appendix XI. The many years on which coolies, as a rule, remain on the Assam gardens is not evidence either of intractability or inefficiency.

8. As far as I can gather, the abuses of the system referred to, apart from Sections 195 and 196, which will be dealt with separately, relate to the following matters:—

(*i*) Malpractices in recruitment. This I admit is a serious evil. The remedy provided by Act VI has not been fully applied.

(*ii*) Heavy charges of recruitment. This is only partly correct—so far that all labour under any labour system is expensive. The Assam charges are not heavier, but, probably, taking all heads initial and subsequent together, lighter than those of labour supply under other labour systems. The Assam cost of importation necessary to maintain labour force, if spread over the working labour force, would not exceed about R4 per working coolie a year; what Assam pays cash down and once for all, the other labour systems have to pay continuously as commission to the headman so long as the coolie remains and works on the garden. The facts stated in paragraphs 8—14 in answer to Question A

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(2) have no doubt unduly raised the Assam charges in recent years. Possibly also the recruiting agents' "forwarding charges" are capable of reduction.

(*iii*) High initial mortality and low initial birth-rate. Dealt with in Appendix II, paragraphs 6—11. It is not, however, the experience of all planters that initial birth-rate is low. On the subject of mortality, I invite reference to Sir D. Fitzpatrick's remarks reproduced in Appendix XII. These remarks may not seem to apply to these years of plenty. But they applied very forcibly so late as 1895—1900; and they are still applicable to numbers of those who come to Assam.

(*iv*) Intractability and inefficiency of labour force. Dealt with in paragraph 7 above.

(*v*) Bad relations between employer and labourers. Dealt with in paragraphs 3—6 above and in Appendix II, paragraphs 29—33. Comparison with other tea producing areas in which direct relations between planter and labourer do not exist is not a fair comparison; and, even if it were, materials for such a comparison are wanting.

(*vi*) Complaints by coolies against planters' oppression, illegal detention, pressure to obtain agreements. Dealt with in the paragraphs cited of Appendix II. Established cases are few relatively to population. Nor are they confined to places under the Act VI system. A bad set of cases occurred in 1903 in Cachar, which is almost entirely under the Act XIII system.

(*vii*) Complaints by planters against coolies. Serious cases are few relatively to number of gardens and large population. This subject is dealt with in Appendix II. That prosecutions and convictions of coolies are few, relatively to labour force, will be seen from Appendix XIII. In 1902-03 and 1903-04 only one coolie a year out of every 976 adults was punished for an offence against the labour system; in 1904-05 only one in every 1,120. The proportion punished is steadily diminishing.

D (5).—*Are they* (*abuses*) *a necessary result of the adoption of that* (*the Assam*) *system?*

9. It is a question of the balancing of the benefits and the evils of the system. Paragraphs 27, 32 and 33, Appendix II, may be referred to. I submit that the evils of the labour system are a comparatively small item in the account when considered in relation to the whole results of the system.

D (6).—*What measures are necessary for their removal?*

10. The evils are capable of control. Briefly, efficient Government supervision is the remedy. The possibility of abuses under a system of direct contracts is a ground for maintaining supervision.

D (7).—*Sir Bampfylde Fuller's proposals.*

11. It is not quite clear what proposals are referred to, apart from the deletion of Sections 195 and 196. Certain proposals are mentioned in the letter of the Chairman, Assam Branch, dated 25th July 1905, and certain others in Circular No. 15-R., dated 28th March 1905. I deal below with both sets, beginning with the first mentioned:—

(*i*) To grant land revenue free after seven years' residence in the Province. The prospect would, I think, be too distant to attract labourers. This proposal has since been superseded by other proposals for forming agricultural settlements near tea gardens which I consider suitable in principle, though the details, in my opinion, require further consideration.

(*ii*) To employ a superior class of sardar. This I consider impracticable, there being no such person available. The superior sardar would be an arkati under a different name. So far as I am aware, it was not the intention of any Act from 1882 to 1901 that superior persons should be employed as recruiting sardars. The sardari recruitment contemplated by these Acts was through ordinary garden sardars and garden coolies.

(*iii*) To add a repatriation clause to the labour contract. I think this might be tried. It would probably help in the Surma Valley. From the Assam Valley I doubt if successful coolies, after three or four years' residence, would avail themselves of it so long as there was so much good land and other sources of easy livelihood available. The result might be that only the Assam failures would be repatriated, who would further discredit Assam. As an alternative proposal I would suggest the grant of two or three months' leave home during the period of the contract. But in that case facilities for recovering absconders would probably have to be given; and the employer should have discretion as to the time of granting the leave, so that a whole family likely to abscond do not go together.

(*iv*) To withdraw the Act from Goalpara, Kamrup and the Surma Valley. This will be dealt with in answer to question II.

(*v*) To set up Act XIII as a workable labour law by arrangement with planters. This has been dealt with in answer to question C.

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D (8).—Withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 of the Act.

12. I do not think there is any ground for supposing that these sections are a cause of short emigration or labour supply. They cannot be a cause of unpopularity of service, because there is, in fact, no such unpopularity.

13. Except in localities specially favoured by situation, one of two methods is employed to retain labour, (1) an indenture, with criminal penalties, or (2) advances likely to end in indebtedness. Where this is necessary to render the indenture effective, summary arrest is included in its incidents. In the Mauritius for instance, with the largest colonial labour force, summary arrest is allowed. In many colonies this power may not be necessary, as it must be far more difficult for an Indian emigrant to make good his escape than from Assam. If the indenture is weakened the likelihood of advances and indebtedness is increased.

14. Private arrest is not necessarily accompanied by physical force. It is more often effected by moral pressure acting on the coolies' fear of the consequences of evading his obligations—fear of criminal prosecution or of the consequences of indebtedness. The line between the two kinds of compulsion must often be difficult to draw. It is difficult to believe that moral pressure verging on, or sometimes accompanied by, physical force is not employed in places where there is no legal right of arrest.

15. It is said that the indiscriminate use of these sections "had produced in the minds of the ignorant labour force a feeling of helplessness and unprotected bondage". Helplessness must be expected among new emigrants in new conditions at a distance from their homes. This is a ground for Government protection. But if there has been "unprotected bondage," this is entirely the fault of Government, for the law gives Government powers of protection which it has never attempted to enforce. I mean the provisions requiring the production of the arrested labourer at the police station. I have been a party to allowing these provisions to slide; but the idea of "unprotected bondage" never occurred or was suggested to me.

16. As a rule, when things have gone wrong between planters and coolies, this has, in my experience, been the fault of defective administration of the labour law. Things were apparently wrong in Cachar in 1903 (Labour Immigration Resolution for 1902-1903, paragraph 35). Shortly before that officers in the North Cachar Hills had been employed under the orders of a former Chief Commissioner to trace out and return tea garden coolies from railway works. (Labour Immigration Report for 1898, paragraph 47: Labour Immigration Report for 1899, paragraph 45). It is not surprising that planters should act upon this example. Things were bad in parts of Tezpur two or three years ago. For some years before that I had been trying to impress upon the Secretariat the danger of sending inexperienced officers to Tezpur as Deputy Commissioner. In 1903, I found what appeared like a system of road patrolling between Tezpur and Mangaldai (to some extent excused by enticement down the road). I had no difficulty in stopping that by an appeal to the good sense of the planters combined with a little initial firmness. Similarly, production of the arrested labourer at the police station could easily have been enforced had this been thought necessary. It has been well known since I first came to Assam that the law was not being complied with on this point.

17. Private arrest, even if not often exercised, is necessary as a check upon desertion and enticement. In view of the desire of Government to withdraw this power, I am prepared to support its withdrawal in respect of time-expired and local coolies (who do not desert much) provided the penalties against enticing, harbouring or receiving agreement coolies are strengthened. On the same understanding I should not even object to its being withdrawn in respect of new sardari coolies, if its withdrawal will lead to real encouragement of free sardari recruiting. But I think it absolutely necessary to retain this power in respect of arkati coolies during their first contracts. These coolies are frequently single men and women, with no ties on the garden; they take a long time to settle down, and, until settled, are given to desertion and can easily be enticed away; and many of them are professional bolters. The number of the latter would be likely to increase with the withdrawal of the power.

18. The arkati is a necessary evil in Assam recruiting, and a large number of arkati recruits has to be imported every year into parts of the Assam Valley. Their introduction, under a proper system of recruitment, is an advantage to the industry and the Province, and also to the emigrants. If the hold over them were weakened, importations would diminish, to the disadvantage of all concerned. On the other hand, it is by no means certain that the coolie would, in practice, be relieved of arrest or of pressure equivalent to arrest. It is wiser to recognise the fact that with this class of coolie the indenture will be valueless unless the power of arrest is allowed, and that, whether allowed or not, it is bound to be exercised in one way or another.

D (9).—Possibility of organised recruiting by the Indian Tea Association, or by some other body similarly constituted.

19. I think it is hopeless to expect that a voluntary combination of all, or nearly all, employers in Assam, or even in the Assam Valley, can be formed for recruiting, or that if formed it can long be maintained. The conditions necessary for forming such a combination would, I think, be (*a*) that Government should make it compulsory on all concerns to recruit through it and prohibit all private recruiting; (*b*) as a consequence of the above that Government should supervise and control its operations and be responsible that all concerns are equally and fairly dealt with; and (*c*) that the law against enticement should be strengthened. The

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last point is, I think, essential, as many gardens might abstain from joining and recruit locally.

20. Personally, I think the scheme too ambitious, and would prefer to encourage smaller voluntary associations, agencies, and combinations by granting them special concessions. Approved bodies might, *e. g.*, be allowed to recruit through *licensed arkatis* or locally engaged persons of the "superior sardar" class (who may be available in the recruiting districts) on the responsibility of their local agents, somewhat on the old special local agents' system.

D (10).—Recommendations.

21. Confining attention to the Assam Valley, my recommendations are : (1) the recruiting system should be such as will receive the support and assistance of the Governments concerned. This it has not enjoyed since 1901.

(2) It should also be such as is likely, as far as possible, and allowing for their natural prejudice against loss of population from their own districts, to be actively supported and assisted by the local officers in the recruiting districts.

If the support of the Governments and local officers is ensured, I would welcome almost any change, provided that the essential parts of the Assam system which are still necessary are retained, *i. e.*, direct relations between employer and labourer ; Government supervision ; control of all arkati recruiting ; and effective protection to importers of labour, including private arrest (subject to any additional safeguards which may be considered necessary) in the case of new arkati importations.

(3) The true facts regarding the condition and settlement of immigrants in Assam should be placed before officers and the public in the recruiting districts. At present the failure of emigrants to return is not understood.

(4) The true facts regarding the wages of tea coolies—also not understood—should be placed before officers and the public in the recruiting districts.

(5) All unlicensed arkati recruiting should be effectively suppressed in all areas to which the Act applies, and also in contiguous areas, if smuggling of recruits is attempted.

(6) There should be a rule that every arkati recruit must be registered in the actual district of his recruitment—*i. e.*, that the Registering Officer shall not register if he has reason to believe that the recruit has been smuggled from another district. This proposal has been made and negatived more than once before, but recent experience shows that it is necessary.

(7) Either,

(*a*) Real and active encouragement should be given to sardari recruiting, which means unregistered recruiting, for the sardar cannot run the gauntlet of registration. It has been clearly enough established that registration as a remedy against recruiting malpractices can only be effective if made so strict as to be deterrent to emigration (see also Appendix XIV), or

(*b*) If initial registration is insisted on, a suitable system of registered emigration must be devised. A system on the lines of the old special local agents' system, but working through licensed arkatis, would probably be best. Registration may be used as a means, but control over the recruiter should be mainly relied upon.

(8) In any case I would allow the local agents of approved combinations, associations or agencies, to recruit through *licensed* arkatis or "superior sardars" on the lines of the old special local agents' system. Recruits so obtained should be subject to all the regulations applicable to arkati recruits.

(9) Section 90 should be applied in all districts. It should be amended on the points indicated under question E.

(10) Chapter V should be made more elastic so as to meet exceptional or unforeseen cases, such as employers recruiting direct without any sardar, or persons of approved respectability other than professional agents acting on behalf of employers.

(11) A repatriation clause might be inserted in the contract entered into in the recruiting districts, or in the alternative (and I think this is preferable for the Assam Valley) a certain amount of leave home during the contract period might be allowed. But this is a point which would require careful consideration as to details and consultation with planters.

(12) There should apparently be better supervision of recruiting in the recruiting districts. An Assam Officer—or more than one—not below the standing of a Deputy Commissioner might be deputed each season to the recruiting districts to assist and advise the local officers and watch recruiting in Assam interests. The Assam Government could well afford the expenditure, seeing that it profits so much in revenue from the labour system.

(13) Better supervision of the labour system is required in Assam ; especially sanitary supervision in respect of new coolies and children. There should be trained and experienced officers in charge of tea districts and sub-divisions. They should look upon labour immigration as an important part of their work and not as a burdensome tax on their time. In the Sibsagar district, for instance, at present, neither the Deputy Commissioner nor either of the

Sub-divisional Officers have had training in or experience of the labour system. In the principal tea districts there should be an Assistant Commissioner, with full magisterial powers, specially to assist the Deputy Commissioner in this work. Supervision of the labour system is an important, and, in some tea districts, perhaps the most important, branch of the revenue administration. **Shillong.**

(14) Encouragement should be given to the formation of agricultural settlements of tea coolies in the tea districts near the gardens, this being the best practicable solution of the labour difficulty of the future, but not so as to attract away labour from the tea gardens or to facilitate enticement. The gardens which import most labour have the best claims to land concessions from Government.

(15) It might be well to provide that no coolies should be legally compellable to turn out to work more than 22 days in the month. I think this might help recruiting and would probably not interfere with the efficiency of the labour force. But on this point consultation with planters is necessary.

(16) An Advisory Board might be formed in each Province whom the Local Government could consult on important matters affecting the labour or emigration system. I was opposed to this proposal when put forward some years ago, but, on further consideration, I think it is desirable. The history of Assam labour emigration is full of mistakes and breaks of policy. With a small Board of experienced officers and non-officials these would be avoided and co-operation between Government and the industry promoted.

22. But if the decision come to is that Surma Valley recruiting has to be controlled, and that the retention of the Act for this purpose is necessary for the Surma Valley, I think it would be preferable to have one law suitable to both the Assam and the Surma Valleys. In that case I would recommend legislation on the lines of Appendix XV. The recommendations in the preceding paragraph could be incorporated in substance.

Question E.—The expediency, if Act VI be retained, of extending the scope of Section 90 of that Act.

If the Act is retained in its present form, certainly Sections 3 and 90 should be extended to all the areas to which the Act applies, with a reasonable interpretation in practice. Arkati recruitment in all districts should be controlled and sardari recruitment encouraged.

2. Certain difficulties in working Section 90 have been brought to my notice:—

(1) Clause (*f*). It is said that, as the majority of the sardars cannot write, the three days' notice practically means three days' detention in the depot.

(2) Clause (*g*). It is urged that when the sardar brings in recruits, he ought to be allowed to return to his recruiting work, leaving the recruits to be sent up with the local agent's man. I have been told that the sardars themselves object to Section 90 for this reason.

(3) Difficulties have frequently occurred under this section in assisting back coolies on leave, or those who, having returned to their country, wish to come back to the garden or to bring up others.

I think that the section could be amended on the above points without endangering its chief object, *viz.*, to ensure that arkatis are not passed off as Section 90 sardars.

Question F.—The effect of Madras Act V of 1866 (Labour Contracts with Natives Act) in restricting emigration to Assam from that Presidency.

There seems to be no reason why the Madras Act should have force in areas to which Act VI applies or may be extended.

2. As regards Tamils from Southern India, the question is whether they are likely to be able to stand the Assam or Surma Valley climate. On this question I can give no opinion. There is the further question whether their recruitment for Assam might not diminish the supply of labour for Southern India and Ceylon.

Question II.—Whether the withdrawal of Act VI from the Surma Valley will prejudicially affect recruitment for the Upper Assam Valley districts and, if so, the measures calculated to ensure a sufficient supply of labour for those districts after the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley and Lower Assam Valley districts.

I cannot find that any one wishes to withdraw the whole of Act VI from the Surma Valley, Kamrup and Goalpara. The Act is in force in the neighbouring Bengal districts, some of which are transit districts, and in which little or no actual recruiting is done; and to the same extent it would be required in the Surma Valley and the Lower Assam districts. Sir B. Fuller wishes to retain Sections 122 and 123 as to inspection, registers and returns. But obviously something more would have to be retained under his proposal, *viz.*, Section 3 of the Act, as, otherwise, any one could start a free arkati depot in the Surma Valley or Lower Assam and defeat all the recruiting provisions of the law. The prohibition under Section 3, however, would be a most undesirable restriction on movements of the population between contiguous areas; it would be vexatious and probably inefficacious.

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2. Nor can I find that any one has proposed to start a "free" labour system in the Surma Valley. There is no question of substituting free for indentured labour. It would be raising a false issue to suggest this. It is merely a question of changing the authorised indenture from one form to another from Act VI to Act XIII. The new indenture would be a little less severe on the coolie, but it would be wanting in safeguards for his protection. Much mischief has been done in the past, and many erroneous inferences drawn regarding the Assam labour system from confusing "non-Act," which includes Act XIII, with "free" labour. All "free" labour is non-Act, but all non-Act is not "free."

3. So far as I know the Surma Valley planters have not asked for a "free" labour or emigration system. The Surma Valley Branch Association judging from their resolution of 29th May 1905 want a new indentured labour system based upon penalties against enticement, stoppage of arkati recruiting for the Surma Valley, and treatment of cost of importation as an advance under Act XIII. The Surma Valley memorialist proprietors, too, have not asked for free labour, but for a recognised Act XIII indenture.

4. As to emigration, the Surma Valley proprietors appear to be incorrectly informed as to the facts. Their memorial was apparently based on the misapprehension that unlicensed arkati recruiting had not been condemned in previous enquiries into the labour system. This misapprehension appears in Messrs. Sanderson and Partners' letter published in the "Englishman" of 25th November 1905.

5. If the whole Act, except Sections 122 and 123, is withdrawn from the Surma Valley and Kamrup, Assam Valley recruitment would be prejudiced in the following ways: (*a*) arkatis would be let loose to recruit for the Surma Valley, (*b*) Assam Valley recruiters would be able to recruit ostensibly for the Surma Valley or Kamrup, but in reality for the upper tea districts of the Valley; (*c*) arkatis would be able to recruit ostensibly for the Surma Valley or Kamrup, passing their recruits on to recruiters for the Upper Assam Valley districts. The whole control over recruitment would be weakened. To prevent these results, supervision would be necessary involving a certain amount of interference and restrictions. Section 3 or a substitute for it would be necessary, and with Section 3 some recruiting provision of the nature of Section 90. The Surma Valley could not escape this interference or get the unrestricted recruiting which they want. Further consequences of withdrawing the whole Act (except Sections 122 and 123) would be (*d*) that the repatriation clauses and the sanitary and other transit regulations in respect of emigrants to the Upper Assam Valley would not apply during their journey through the districts from which the Act was withdrawn. Further the labour supply for the Upper Assam Valley would be prejudicially affected because (*e*) enticement in transit through the Surma Valley, Kamrup or Goalpara would be subject to no criminal penalty; (*f*) harbouring of deserters could be carried on with impunity; and (*g*) warrants could not be taken out in these districts against deserters from the Upper Assam districts or their enticers.

6. The expression "withdrawing the Act" when used with reference to a labour district has hitherto meant withdrawing the Act penal contract or removing the district from the list of labour districts. It has not meant the withdrawal of those provisions of the Act which apply also to non-labour districts. The Government of India may possibly have used the expression in the old sense as they say that "the withdrawal of the Act from the Surma Valley is, indeed, only tantamount to the legal formulation of the practice now obtaining there."

7. Assuming the course contemplated to be the removal of the Surma Valley and Kamrup from the list of labour districts, I would point out that the Act, or a substitute for it, would still be necessary to control arkati recruiting. Unless arkatis are controlled the whole recruiting system both for the Assam Valley and the Surma Valley would be ruined—absolutely ruined. My recommendations under question D regarding Assam Valley recruitment are dependent on the control of arkati recruitment for the Surma Valley also.

8. Appendix XV seems to me the best solution of the difficulty. I have reason to believe it would be accepted by planters generally. I placed it almost in the same words before several Assam Valley planters last year and it met with a fair measure of acceptance (I, however, subsequently added two or three clauses for the protection of the coolie). The Assam Valley would, I think, accept it if liberally carried out, and, with sufficient provision for free sardari recruiting especially in the United Provinces, it would give the Surma Valley all they could reasonably ask for.

10. An alternative would be to let the Act stand without removing the Surma Valley and Kamrup from the list of labour districts (Goalpara may be removed from the list), but to declare under Section 221 that these districts shall cease to be subject to certain provisions of the Act, namely, those under which labour contracts can be executed or enforced. This would be a compliance with the Government of India's decision to withdraw the Act from these districts; but it would hardly be a satisfactory course, and it would probably not satisfy the Surma Valley planters.

NOTE.—As the Appendices extend to great length, I have, with the concurrence of the Committee, shortened them by omitting some portions which, having been laid before the Committee, I do not consider it necessary should be printed.

APPENDIX I.

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Tea Immigrant Population in Assam.

In 1903 I prepared a note on this subject, the opening paragraph and conclusion of which I quote below :—

> "From paragraphs 66 and 200 of the Assam Census Report for 1901 an erroneous inference might be drawn that Mr. Allen estimated the colonisation of ex-tea-settlers in Assam Proper at about 100 000 only. What Mr. Allen meant was that this was the minimum estimate of ex-tea-setters *in the villages*, not a complete or approximate estimate of all such settlers, his object being to indicate certain large classes of which there was no doubt that practically every member was an ex-tea-settler. But as wrong inferences may be drawn from his figures and as his conclusions appear at first sight to go—and on one point perhaps actually go—somewhat beyond their premises, I have examined the census figures carefully and give below an approximate estimate of all ex-tea-immigrants among the general population (*i. e.*, outside tea gardens) of Assam Proper."
>
> * * * * * *
>
> "*Estimate for the Province including Surma Valley.*"—So far I have dealt only with Assam Proper with the result of finding more or less 200,000 ex-tea-immigrant settlers. Including the immigrants on tea gardens, the population for which Assam Proper was indebted to the tea industry at the time of the census was about 550,000, or 25 per cent. of total population. In 1881 the proportion was less than 8 per cent. In the Surma Valley (with which I need not deal in detail) there cannot be less than 100,000 ex-tea-immigrants including those who found their way to railway works in North Cachar. This gives a total for the Province of about 300,000 ex-tea-coolie settlers, of whom more than 200,000 may be taken as having settled to cultivation. Adding the 600,000 or so immigrants of the coolie class censused on the tea gardens, we have a total of some 900,000 as the population for which the Province was indebted to the tea industry at the census time. If we include persons other than coolies, such as Babus and Traders attracted by the tea industry, the number would be well over 900,000."

2. A draft of the note from which the above are extracts was submitted to Mr. Allen, and he authorised me to say that he concurred generally in the conclusions arrived at in the note, and that his estimates of ex-tea-coolie settlers in paragraphs 66 and 200 of his Census Report were meant to be minimum and not exhaustive estimates.

* * * * * *

14. *Increase since 1901 of ex-tea-immigrants in general population : Province.*—Since the census there must have been an increase of at least 50,000—and probably more—among the ex-coolie population in the Assam Valley. The grounds for this statement are :—First, for the first time in Assam immigration there has been natural growth of tea immigrant population in the Assam Valley, and births have exceeded deaths both on tea gardens and (probably) among the ex-coolie general population. Secondly, some 100,000 immigrants (less double immigrations) have been imported to the Assam Valley in this period. Thirdly, notwithstanding these additions by importations and natural growth, the immigrant labour force of tea gardens has remained stationary, or has only slightly increased. As only a small proportion of the immigrants who leave the gardens return to their native districts, the inference is that the larger portion have settled in the Valley. Fourthly, this inference is confirmed by the large increase of nearly 40,000 acres in the area of Government *khiraj* land settled direct with ex-tea-immigrants between 1901-02 and 1905-06 (inclusive). This area is exclusive of any increase in their cultivation as sub-tenants, and also of any increase in the *khiraj* area likely to be settled with them in the Regular Settlement of 1906-07 now being made.

15. For the Surma Valley I have not sufficient materials for an estimate. There has, however, been some importation from outside the Province (probably not more than 20,000), and there has also been natural growth by excess of births over deaths, while the tea garden labour force has slightly decreased since 1901. The inference is that there must have been some additions to the settled ex-coolie population.

16. The net result is an estimate of some 950,000 persons of the tea immigrant classes at present in the Province. Some 600,000 on tea gardens and 350,000 outside. If we add Managers, Clerks, Doctors, Traders and others attracted to the Province by the tea industry, the population due to the industry cannot now be far short of 1,000,000.

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APPENDIX II.

Assam Valley Labour System.

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2. *Classes benefiting by the Labour System.*—The question is often argued as if the Labour System was kept up solely for the benefit of tea proprietors, share-holders, planters and agents. This is a great mistake. The benefits of the system extend also to (1) the emigrating classes in the recruiting provinces ; (2) the coolie immigrants residing on the estates ; (3) the ex-coolie immigrant settlers outside the estates in the Assam Districts ; (4) the Assam cultivating and trading population ; (5) the Indian general tax-payer ; and (6) the Assam Province generally. This note will endeavour to explain the benefits of the system to these classes.

3. *Results of the system generally.*—In Appendix I, I have estimated that the population which the Assam Province owes to the tea industry (including oil, coal and other industries) is now between 950,000 and 1,000,000. Its rate of growth may be examined here.

The Provincial tea garden labour force, according to the Labour Immigration Returns, was 188,785 in 1881 ; 408,140 in 1891 ; and 662,471 in 1901. The censused tea garden population was : 1881—255,805 ; 1891—454,224 ; 1901—657,331.

In the Assam Valley separately, the labour force was : 1881—106,984 ; 1891—225,567 ; 1901—385,662. The censused tea garden population was : 1881—140,724 ; 1891 - 243,152 ; 1901—383,392.

The foreign-born tea coolie population in the Province both on tea gardens and among the general population was estimated by the Census officers at 232,247 in 1881 ; 423,199 in 1891, and 645,700 in 1901. The total tea immigrant population (foreign and Assam born), as estimated by me, was probably under 100,000 in 1871 ; under 300,000 in 1881 ; about 550,000 in 1891 ; and something approaching 900,000 in 1901.

In the Assam Valley separately, the estimate for foreign born tea coolies would be : 1881, about 125,000 ; 1891, under 250,000 ; 1901, under 400,000. The estimate for total tea immigrant population including the Assam born would be : 1871, under 50,000 ; 1881, under 150,000 ; 1891, about 325,000, 1901, about 550,000.

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The total foreign born Indian population as censused in Assam, including non-tea immigrants, was: 1881—271,697; 1891—496,869; 1901—748,488. In the Assam Valley, separately, it was: 1881—147,752: 1891—279,894; 1901—458,472.

4. There is no Indian coolie emigration elsewhere which has produced permanent results to touch the above.

In Ceylon—the only territory which can suitably be compared with Assam—the Indian born population was: in 1881—276,788; 1891—264,580; 1901—436,622. The estate population was under 450,000 in 1901. The Tamil population on the estates appears from Mr. Arbuthnott's Report to have been 339,228, of whom 74,604 appear to be Ceylon-born Tamils. The emigration from India, though large each year, is temporary or perhaps the coolies have not the opportunities or the means to set up for themselves independently of the gardens, as Assam coolies do. From paragraph 186 of the Indian Census Report for 1901 we learn that among the emigrants there are 63 women to 100 men (among tea immigrants separately the proportion would appear from Mr. Arbuthnott's Report to be about 75 to 100); that not many remain permanently in Ceylon, and that indigenous Tamils greatly exceed immigrant Tamils.

Burma and Bengal offer a large field for general labour. In Burma there were 475,328 foreign-born persons in 1901, including Chinese and others. The Indian-born population rose from 280,720 in 1891 to 415,935 in 1901 or much less than in Assam, although the annual emigration is apparently larger. In the large Province of Bengal (as then constituted) the Indian foreign-born population was 583,205 in 1891 and 728,690 in 1901—less than in Assam. Including Nepalese (many of them tea coolies) and other non-Indians, the entire foreign-born population of Bengal was only 915,158.

Turning to the Colonies, in the Straits, with an annual immigration of several thousands a year from Madras, the Indian-born population rose from 53,927 in 1891 to only 57,150 in 1901. In the Mauritius, Natives of India are stated at 265,163 (Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India, 9th issue, page 436). The marginal figures taken from the Encyclopædia Britannica show proportion of Indians to total population, the term "Hindu coolies" apparently including Mahomedans and others. There has not been much growth these 20 years. In British Guiana the Indian population of 1901 was estimated at 125,375; in Trinidad at 85,650; in Natal at 65,925. In other Colonies it was less.

	Total population.	Hindu coolies.
1881 . .	360,847	249,064
1891 . .	371,655	255,500
1901 . .	380,040	261,136

5. Assam labour emigration is thus a much larger and more permanent thing than emigration elsewhere and cannot be compared with labour systems resting on temporary emigration or carried on a much smaller scale. For reasons given in the statement (answer to Question D, paragraph 4) the Jalpaiguri and Madras labour systems cannot be compared with Assam.

* * * * * * * *

14. *Wages.*—The misapprehension as to the wages of tea coolies is as great as that as to their disappearance (the latter subject is dealt with in Appendix I and in annexure G to this Appendix). The R5 (or R4) wage is the minimum, and the average earnings of working coolies are, and always have been, above this rate. Up to 1900 no returns of wages were submitted by employers, but certain statistics were collected by Inspectors at their inspections of tea gardens which were shown in the annual reports. The form of the statements in the Inspection note contained the following headings (page 209, Immigration Manual):—

Heading I.—Number of Labourers in Register—Form 46.
" II.—Number of days worked.
" III.—Actual wage received including *ticca*.
" IV.—Average rate per head.

These headings were all uncertain, thus: *Heading I.* The number in the Registers is generally in excess of *available* strength, as there are transfers during the month from one Register to another or one class of coolies to another (Act, non-Act adult, children). Further, the available strength is always in excess of *working* strength. Wages calculated on the number of coolies in the Register must always be short of wages earned by work done. The following is an illustration: suppose 26 men work for one day each in the month, and 26 others for the whole 26 days. Their full wages at R5 per month would be $R5 \times 27 = R135$. But their average wage per head according to the method of calculation adopted would be (not $R\frac{135}{27} = R5$, but) $R\frac{135}{52}$ or R2-9-6, although each man earned full pay for each day he turned out work.

Heading II.—This heading was inserted to correct the above error by furnishing materials on which the average working strength which earned the wages could be calculated. But it was uncertain whether the heading meant (*a*) number of days' work (*haziris*) credited, or (*b*) number of days on which the coolies turned out to work. The statements were generally prepared as if (*a*) was meant. Certain instructions were issued in 1895 or 1896 explaining that (*b*) was the meaning, but they were not clear and were not embodied in the form of the statement.

Heading III was open to the greatest uncertainty. There was no mention of "bonus" (which is simply an advance of wages) or "sick allowance" and it was not clear whether "actual wage received" meant (*a*) wage earned shown in column 5 of Attendance Roll (page 193, Manual) or (*b*) wage paid after deducting advances, shown in column 12. The two things are of course very different, especially on gardens which regularly supply rice to the coolies. Probably (*a*) was what was meant, but (*b*) was often entered. In the Lotabar case, *e.g.*, in which it was proposed to close the garden to Act labour on account of insufficiency of wages, the average per head was apparently calculated on wages paid after deducting advances. An unauthorised form of inspection report prescribed by the Commissioner about 1895 included "bonus" for first class gardens in the Assam Valley; but the form was not adopted for the Province till about 1898 or 1899.

15. If then the total wages reported in many cases omitted "bonus," "sick allowance" and "rations," and if, in addition to this, in many cases wages *paid*, after deducting advances, and not wages *earned* were shown (the value of advances of rice or money being omitted), it is easy to understand how the total thus obtained, having for its divisor the number of coolies on the books and not the working strength, was found to result in reported average wages much in defect of those actually earned. And these were the averages which were quoted in the Debate in Council in 1901 in support of the Government case when Act VI was passed. And not only so, but these averages were still further reduced in respect of Act labourers by quoting the average of the Sub-divisional averages, without regard to the number of Act labourers in each Sub-division. The Sylhet Sub-divisions, *e.g.*, with few Act labourers and low wages, were each given the same value as Dibrugarh with many thousands of Act labourers and high wages.

16. The fact is that the wages statements before 1901 were not obtained for statistical purposes, but as an aid to inspection and were meant to be supplemented by the Inspector's scrutiny. This was clearly recognised by former Chief Commissioners (see paragraph 33, Labour Immigration Report for 1893). In 1901 a form of return to be submitted by planters was prescribed by Sir H. Cotton, but the uncertainty as to the "number" of labourers on which the average was to be struck and total amount "paid" as wages, still continued. A column was added to show "bonus," but the column, showing the amount of work done, was omitted.

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17. The figures quoted in Council as the average wages of Act labourers were R4-11-6 for men and R3-12-2 for women on the average of the four years 1896—1899, or R8-7-8 per man and woman. For 1902-03 returns for the whole year in the form prescribed in 1901 were available. I quote the following from an examination of the returns which I made at the time :—

"The latest available returns—those for 1902-03—show that the average monthly earnings, including bonus, of a man and a woman in the Assam Valley, and in the Province generally, were as shown in the margin, the average of a working child being R2-8-7 in the Assam Valley, and R2-6-7 in the whole Province. This was the first year in which the wages were properly calculated throughout the year. * * * But our returns do not yet show how much work the coolies did to earn these wages. * * * We know, however, from general experience that Act coolies turn out to work not more than 22 days in the month on the average, the men possibly a little more, the women certainly less. The earnings of Act coolies would be at the average rate of not less than R10-8-0 a month per man and woman per month of 26 working days, as compared with the minimum rate of R9 prescribed by law. The non-Act coolies who are older hands and have more cultivation and other business of their own to attend to, turn out to work less than Act coolies ; but they are more experienced hands and can do more work when they turn out and earn better pay."

	Act.	Non-Act.
	R A. P.	R A. P.
Assam Valley—		
Men	5 7 7	5 15 11
Women	4 4 6	4 5 1
Total	9 12 1	10 5 0
Province—		
Men	5 6 4	5 8 4
Women	4 4 2	3 15 0
Total	9 10 6	9 7 4

"In the margin are given details of the labour force in the Assam Valley for the last completed year. The wages returns are not quite complete, the returns of certain gardens having been omitted. We may assume from these figures that the average coolie family consists of 1 working man, 1 working woman, a fraction—about $\frac{3}{10}$ths—of a working child, about 1 non-working child, and a fraction—about $\frac{2}{10}$ths—of an adult non-working dependant. The average monthly wages actually earned by a working man and woman and the proportionate fraction of a working child range from R11-9-4 per month in Dibrugarh to R8-15-1 in Mangaldai and R8-2-3 in Gauhati (the averages for these two Sub-divisions being much below all the others), varying according to the circumstances of each Sub-division, the cost of living, the extent to which the coolies engage in cultivation or other occupations as subsidiary means of livelihood, the demand for labour and the supply available. The average for the whole of the Assam Valley is R10-14-2. Assuming that the amount was obtained for 22 days' work, it would be equivalent to wages at the rate of about R12 per month of 26 working days per man, woman and $\frac{3}{10}$ths of a child. This is the actual monthly rate at which wages were earned ; the rate earnable would, of course, be in excess of this. The same working unit of $2\frac{3}{10}$ workers, if healthy and industrious and expert at their work, could, on most gardens, earn considerably more, especially during the busy half of the year."

According to Annual Immigration returns— Average labour force, 1902-03.		According to monthly wages returns— Average labour force, 1902-03.	
Act VI labourers—		Act VI labourers—	
(Adults)	93,569	Men	47,259
Non-Act labourers—		Women	42,911
(Adults)	149,679	Total	90,170
Children	142,583	Non-Act workers—	
Total	385,831	Men	62,949
		Women	61,703
		Total	124,652
		Working children	84,129

18. In 1903 a new form of wages return was prescribed, designed to show available labour force as well as working strength in addition to the total number on the books ; and it was explained that wages earned, and not wages paid (after deducting advances), should be shown. But the form was too complicated for the garden office establishment and was frequently incorrectly filled in, and the figures returned of the strength of the labour force were in many cases not reliable. It was, however, estimated that the average number of days on which Act coolies turn out to work was 21 or 22 in the month (paragraph 20, Labour Immigration Resolution, 1903-04). The average wages calculated on the total number on the books in the Assam Valley were as shown in the margin. The Provincial average, as shown in the printed resolution, is somewhat less for most of the figures. Abstracts of those returns for the Assam Valley are annexed as Annexures A and B.

	1903-04.	1904-05.
	R A. P.	R A. P.
Act—		
Men	5 7 8	5 9 0
Women	4 7 0	4 7 4
Total	9 14 8	10 0 4
Non-Act—		
Men	5 11 4	5 10 6
Women	4 2 1	4 1 9
Total	9 13 5	9 12 1
Children	2 9 3	2 8 4

19. In 1905 the form of return was again revised, so as to show the working strength, as well as number on the books, of the labour force (but not the available strength, the attempts to show it having failed ; it can, however, be roughly calculated by deducting a small percentage from the total number on the books). The returns, were prescribed for two months in the year, September, when plenty of *ticca* would be available and wages would ordinarily be high ; and March, a slack month, in which wages would ordinarily be low. I have obtained a copy of the consolidated returns for September 1905 for the Assam Valley from the Commissioner's office. An abstract of it is annexed as annexture C. The return may be taken to be fairly correct. The average wages calculated both on total number on the books and on working strength are shown in the margin. The average earned per family of a man, a woman, and $\frac{2}{10}$ths of a working child (as assumed) was R11-15-2 on total number on the books (for about 21 days' work in the month), and R15-4-0 on working strength. The highest average per family was in Dibrugarh, R14-2-1 on total number and R17-8-11 on working strength ; the lowest apparently in Jorhat, R9-11-4 on total number, and R12-8-2 on working strength. I would suggest that the Committee should call for the Surma Valley returns for September and such of the returns as have been sent in in both Valleys for March 1906, so as to be able to strike an average between the busy and the comparatively slack months.

	On total number.	On working strength.
	R A. P.	R A. P.
Act—		
Men	6 5 9	7 9 7
Women	5 5 0	6 13 5
Total	11 10 9	14 7 0
Non-Act—		
Men	6 1 1	7 11 6
Women	4 11 0	6 4 2
Total	10 12 1	13 15 8
Working children	3 0 2	3 12 0

20. The broad result is that an average labour force of more or less 250,000 workers in the Assam Valley, (men, women and children), with a daily average working strength of between 200,000, and 210,000, (the

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labour force turning out to work on the average between 21 and 22 days in each month) earn between them wages to the amount of something between R1,40,00,000 and R1,50,00,000 in the year. And this is exclusive of the other advantages, equivalent to wages, of residence on the estates, and of other subsidiary sources of livelihood, such as cultivation, cattle, poultry, live-stock, cart-owning, etc., in which a considerable number of the coolies engage. The wages are sufficient to enable coolies to live in comfort and to save money, and if thrifty and hard-working, to retire from tea garden service, if they wish to do so, in a few years, and this in a country with abundance of land available for cultivation and no want of openings in other occupations.

* * * * * * * *

22. *Act and Non-Act Death-rate and Wages.*—I think it necessary to refer briefly here to a misapprehension which exists as regards the death-rate and wages of Act and non-Act coolies. It is often said that Act coolies earn less wages and die at a higher rate than non-Act coolies. Various reasons are assigned for this (such as the Act coolie being *adscriptus glebae*, being compelled to labour for less than a living wage, etc.). And comparisons are drawn between Act and so-called free labour to the disadvantage of the former. There is a two-fold misapprehension here. In the first place, there is no difference whatever between Act coolies and non-Act coolies of the same class and standing as regards their wages or death-rate. The difference is between new coolies and old coolies. New immigrants, being unacclimatised, die at a higher rate than old acclimatised coolies, and being less expert at their work, earn lower wages, as in every other business. The Act results as a whole compare disadvantageously with the non-Act simply because the Act class contains a far larger proportion of new coolies. I went into this matter fully in my letter, written as Commissioner of the Assam Valley, No. 393 G., dated the 19th February 1900, to which I invite a reference should there be any doubt on the point. Secondly, the non-Act group does not consist entirely of free labourers. A large proportion of it consists of Act XIII labourers under penal contracts working under conditions very similar to those of Act VI coolies in the same locality.

23. *Labour System as affecting Indigenous Population.*—Turning now from immigrants to the indigenous population, Annexure D read with paragraph 27 of the note will give some idea of their profits from tea gardens. The tea coolies' wages alone (excluding other local expenditure of the tea industry, say between a quarter and half a crore) if distributed among the entire population outside tea gardens and railway camps in the Assam Proper districts come to R8 per head per annum. I do not mean to say that the whole amount finds its way to the Assamese population. A good deal goes on imported food and goods, a good deal to profits of foreign traders, and a good deal to ex-coolie settlers. But a considerable proportion remains for the Assamese trading and cultivating population. In the Kamrup district the direct profits are small, but this district and the adjoining Sub-division of Mangaldai send up most of the Assamese coolies who earn wages on the tea gardens of Upper Assam. A certain amount of produce is also sent up from Kamrup, as well as from Nowgong. The cultivators of these districts (the Assamese population being nearly all small cultivators) also benefit indirectly by the rice of the Upper districts being locally absorbed by the tea coolies instead of being sent down to lower prices in Kamrup and Nowgong.

24. *Labour system as affecting the Province generally.*—As illustrating the effect of the tea industry on the Province generally, I append Annexure E showing the growth of the revenue demand under the "principal heads" in the Assam Valley since 1881. Compared with population the results are abstracted below :—

	Total population (in thousands).			Demand under principal heads of revenue (in thousands of rupees.)		
	1881.	1891.	1901.	1880-1881.	1890-1891.	1900-1901.
Other districts (Goalpara, Kamrup, Nowgong)	1,407	1,434	1,312	23,64	27,08	30,73
Principal tea districts (Darrang, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur)	845	1,042	1,307	26,94	34,39	52,03
	2,252	2,476	2,619	50,58	61,47	82,76

The growth of the tea industry in the two groups of districts has been as follows :—

	Area under tea (in thousands of acres).			Tea garden population (in thousands).		
	1880-1881.	1890-1891.	1900-1901.	1881.	1891.	1901.
Goalpara, Kamrup, Nowgong	18	19	17	18	25	27
Darrang, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur	72	113	188	124	219	357
	90	132	205	142	244	384

I do not wish to push too far the comparison between the rate of growth of revenue in two groups of districts, firstly, because the first-mentioned group contains Goalpara, a permanently settled district, with not much increase of revenue, and secondly, because this group suffered severely from *kala-azar*, earth-quake and floods. I would rather invite consideration of the results for the principal tea districts taken by themselves and of the results for the Assam Valley as a whole compared with those of other Divisions in this Province and in Bengal.

* * * * * * * *

27. *Summary of benefits of labour systems.*—That the tea industry, including in this term our other Assam industries such as oil and coal, has been the chief agency for civilizing and developing Assam Proper, is a fact beyond dispute. It is the tea industry to which Assam Proper is indebted for its increase of population

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since 1881. Between 1881 and 1901 Assam Proper suffered from the *kala-azar* pestilence and exceptional unhealthiness, now fortunately come to an end, and its indigenous population diminished by about 5 per cent. Whatever increase of permanent population took place was due mainly to immigration carried on by the tea industry and to the good fortune of the principal tea districts in escaping *kala-azar*. Through the instrumentality of the tea industry, there are now some 250,000 persons of the immigrant classes (including their children), who have left the tea gardens and are settled to cultivation or other occupations in the Assam Valley, enjoying far more favourable conditions as to abundance of good land available for settlement, security of crops from drought, absence of serious competition, practical certainty of employment, practical immunity from famine or serious scarcity and comparative freedom from indebtedness, than could have fallen to their lot in their native Provinces. In addition to the above there are some 350,000 immigrants on the estates of the Assam Valley, most of whom have exchanged a scanty or precarious livelihood in their own country for certain employment, and wages and material conditions much better than they could have obtained at home. In course of time a proportion of these will go out into the districts and start cultivation or other occupations independently of the estates, and help to colonise the Valley. It is the tea industry which has opened out the jungle areas of Assam Proper. In doing so, it has clashed to the least possible extent with the interests of the native Assamese population ; for the areas opened out consist of lands unsuited for rice—the principal food crop of this Province—and are mostly situated in outlying tracts, which the Assamese cultivators have rejected in the past, and still reject for their own cultivation. On the contrary, in opening out these lands, the industry has put much wealth into the hands of the cultivators, and, by constant increases (till recently) of its immigrant labour population, has provided them with a ready market at their own doors for the disposal of their surplus rice and other produce. With a large and (till recently) annually increasing labour population, the demand for food has kept ahead of the supply, and prices have been raised and maintained at a high level to the benefit of the cultivators throughout Assam Proper. The tea industry in this Division pays as wages between ₹ 1,40,00,000 and ₹1,50,00,000 a year to its labour force, most of which money remains in the Division. A great part of it finds it way to the ordinary cultivators—both indigenous and settled immigrant—in return for rice, *dal*, fruits, vegetables, fish, cattle, livestock, poultry, and other necessaries or luxuries purchased by the garden coolies. In addition to the wages of the labourers, the local expenditure of the tea industry in this Division amounts to probably something between ₹25,00,000 and ₹50,00,000 a year, part of which finds its way to the ordinary cultivators. It is from the tea gardens or tea garden coolies that the cultivators obtain a great part of the cash with which they pay their land revenue and purchase their opium, imported goods, court-fees, stamps, salt, and other articles bringing in revenue to Government. Nearly 115,000 acres of full revenue paying land are now held by *ex*-tea immigrant coolies direct under Government, paying revenue of something probably between ₹2,50,000 and ₹3,00,000 a year, besides a considerable area—which may be one-third or half as much as that held direct—cultivated by them as sub-tenants of other settlement-holders, and indirectly bringing in land revenue to Government. It is the tea industry which has been the main cause of improved communications and trade in Assam Proper, and which has thus helped to raise the income-tax, customs, railway, postal and telegraph revenue. In one way or another, probably not less than ₹40,00,000 a year of the Government revenue under the "principal heads" derived from the Assam Valley for many years past has come directly or indirectly from the tea industry.

* * * * * * * *

32. *Summary of risks and possible abuses of the Assam labour system.*—So far as I am aware there is no statement of the abuses which form the subject of the present enquiry, and of the facts by which they are established, beyond what is stated in the Government of India's Resolution No. 1384—1392-15, dated 20th February 1906. In the recruiting system there appear from all the evidence available to me to be serious abuses arising from insufficient control of arkati recruiting—an evil not beyond remedy ; the remedy provided by Act VI of 1901 has not yet been fully enforced. In the labour system the evils, dangers and possible abuses may be described as follows :—Initial sickness and high mortality among new immigrants— partly unavoidable owing to change of climate and to the number of famine or scarcity stricken or weakly immigrants who find relief on the Assam gardens, but partly remediable by sanitary supervision and greater care in the selection of recruits : Low initial birth-rate— to a great extent unavoidable : Insufficient wages in individual cases or on particular gardens—a danger to be carefully watched especially in respect of new immigrants : A certain number of pauper and destitute deserters and "name-cut" coolies—their numbers "representing a negligibly small percentage on the coolie population" to quote the words of the Labour Immigration Report for 1901, paragraph 32, and certainly not so serious as Sir H. Cotton suggested in paragraph 2 of his letter No. 3927-J., dated the 10th September 1906, when the Act was under amendment : Extortion of contracts and illegal arrest and detentions—a danger to be carefully watched, but established cases very few in the Assam Valley relatively to scale of operations of the industry (here, too, the remedy provided by the Act has not been fully enforced) : Overwork, unfair treatment and other acts of oppression—also a danger, but cases not many, and, when detected, capable of remedy under the law : Collisions between planters and coolies—cases not numerous considering the direct relations between the parties, the large labour force and the strictness with which such cases are watched and reported.

33. *Comparison between benefits and evils of labour system.*—All the above abuses and perhaps others are, no doubt, possible ; and they are capable of being multiplied according to the imagination or suspicion of the individual. It would be absurd, with so many thousands of coolies and employers and staff, to suppose that they do not occasionally occur. But established bad cases are few considering the large population involved, and it is only by generalising from them that the prevalence of abuses can be charged against the labour system. I venture to think that no impartial person weighing the probable bad against the established good will not say that the good far outweighs the bad in the Assam Valley labour system. We may take all the bad instances any one can give or has given in the past, *e.g.*, all those given in the Debate in Council in 1901 and in the Labour Immigration Report for 1900—these instances apparently covering a period of more than a year—assuming, for the sake of argument, that the facts have in all cases been correctly and completely stated. Even so, it will, I think, be considered that the proved benefits of the system far outweigh the probable evils. It is not as if the evils were beyond the control of Government. Government has ample powers of protection in the interests of the coolies, and the coolies are aware of this, and complain freely to the magistrates, often on frivolous grounds.

34. *Conclusion.*—The view which I present to the Committee is therefore :—(1) that the benefits of the labour system could not have been obtained in the Assam Valley without the Act ; (2) that the Act or a substitute for it, is still necessary for the continuance and spread of those benefits ; (3) that the benefits far outweigh the evils ; and (4) that the evils are better controllable under a system such as that of Act VI than under a system of penal contracts under Act XIII providing no safeguards for the protection of the labourer—a free labour system being admittedly out of the question for the Assam Valley at present. I do not mean to suggest that the whole of the Act as it now stands is absolutely necessary for every class of labourer. The essential parts of the Assam Valley system which I consider it necessary to maintain are—

(*a*) direct relations between employer and labourer, and direct responsibility of the employer for the welfare of his labourers ;

(*b*) strict Government supervision for the protection of the labourers, especially of new immigrants ;

(*c*) effective control of all arkati recruiting ; and

(*d*) effective protection to importers of labour against enticement, and against desertion of arkati recruits.

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ANNEXURE A.

Wages Abstract, 1903-04.

Monthly Average.

	Number on the Books.	Available strength.*	Actual working strength.*	Total wages.	Average wages.	
					On Number on Books.	On actual working strength.*
				R	R	R
Act Men	45,019	41,436	34,620	2,46,893	5·48	7·13
Non-Act Men	70,255	64,545	50,280	4,01,014	5·71	7·97
Total Men	115,274	105,981	84,900	6,47,907	5·62	7·63
Act Women	40,256	36,708	28,770	1,78,784	4·44	6·24
Non-Act Women	69,237	61,193	44,337	2,85,868	4·13	6·44
Total Women	109,493	97,901	73,107	4,64,652	4·25	6·36
Children	34,667	30,638	24,227	89,579	2·58	3·69
Total Workers	259,434	234,520	182,234	12,02,138	4·63	6·59

* The figures in these columns are unreliable.

Average earnings of family [Man, Woman and $\frac{3}{10}$ths working child].

	On Number on Books.	On actual working strength.
	R	R
Man	5·62	7·63
Woman	4·25	6·36
$\frac{3}{10}$ths child	0·77	1·11
Total	10·64	15·10

ANNEXURE B.

Wages Abstract, 1904-05.

Monthly Average.

	Number on the Books.	Available strength.*	Actual working strength.*	Total wages.	Average wages.	
					On Number on Books.	On actual working strength.*
				R	R	R
Act Men	40,995	38,862	32 384	2,27,223	5·56	7·01
Non-Act Men	74,940	72,263	59,084	4,23,550	5·65	7·15
Total Men	115,935	111,125	91,468	6,50,773	5·61	7·11
Act Women	35,961	33,081	25,909	1,60,530	4·46	6·20
Non-Act Women	74,089	68,106	49,858	3,04,369	4·11	6·10
Total Women	110,050	101,187	75,767	4,64,899	4·22	6·14
Children	34,788	32,529	27,664	87.758	2·52	3·17
Total Workers	260,773	244,841	194,899	12,03,430	4·61	6·11

* The figures in these columns are unreliable.

Average per family [Man, Woman and $\frac{3}{10}$ ths working Child].

	On number on Books.	On actual working strength.*
	R	R
Man	5·61	7·11
Woman	4·22	6·14
$\frac{4}{10}$ths child	0·75	0·95
Total	10·58	14·20

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Wages Abstract: September 1905.

	Total No. on the Books.	Actual working strength. (Turned out to work.)	Total wages.	Average wages.	
				On Total No. on the Books.	On working strength.
			R	R	R
Act Men	42,405	35,501	2,69,997	6·36	7·60
Non-Act Men	81,645	63,926	4,93,956	6·07	7·72
Total Men	124,050	99,427	7,63,953	6·16	7·68
Act Women	36,355	28,209	1,18,052	5·31	6·85
Non-Act Women	77,781	58,285	3,65,036	4·69	6·26
Total Women	114,136	86,494	5,58,088	4·89	6·45
Children	34,156	27,110	1,02,819	3·01	3·75
Total workers	2,72,342*	213,031	14,24,860	5·23	6·68

* Deducting a small percentage for transfers of workers from one head to another during the month, the available strength would be arrived at.

Average earnings of family [Man, Woman and $\frac{3}{10}$ths working child].

	On Total No.	On working strength.
	R	R
Man	6·16	7·68
Woman	4·89	6·45
$\frac{3}{10}$ths child	0·90	1·12
	11·95	15·25

ANNEXURE D.

General population and wages of tea coolies.

Sub-division.	Population outside tea gardens and railways, 1901.	Wages of tea coolies (including bonus) 1902-03.	Wages of tea coolies per head of population, column 2.
		R	R
Dibrugarh	165,542	55,36,130	33·4
North Lakhimpur	70,045	4,84,921	6·9
Sibsagar Sadar	148,516	19,29,280	13·0
Jorhat	164,015	20,26,961	12·3
Golaghat	129,917	11,14,258	8·7
Nowgong	236,082	6,24,827	2·7
Tezpur	108,854	16,31,708	15·0
Mangaldai	148,946	6,36,464	4·2
Gauhati	467,424	1,01,184	0·2
Barpeta	115,935	...	...
Total Assam Proper	1,755,276	1,40,85,733	8·0

ANNEXURE E.

Growth of revenue demand under the principal heads.
Assam Valley.

District.	Land Revenue Proper.	Miscellaneous Land Revenue.	Local rates.	Excise.	Forests.	Income tax.	Registration and Stamps.	TOTAL.
				1880-81.				
Goalpara . .	93,918	1,756	59,692	64,638	33,443		36,024	2,89,431
Kamrup . .	9,09,561	24,502	72,613	1,78,810	28,293		60,286	12,74,065
Nowgong . .	4,32,013	21,018	29,515	2,85,720	2,410		30,052	8,00,728
Darrang . .	4,35,675	17,416	32,403	2,78,613	24,541		26,533	8,15,186
Sibsagar . .	6,19,234	26,175	45,632	4,73,085	8,108		47,408	12,19,642
Lakhimpur . .	1,90,795	48,471	11,977	3,73,142	7,542		27,074	6,59,001
TOTAL .	26,81,196	1,39,338	2,51,837	16,54,008	1,04,337		2,27,377	50,58,053
				1890-91.				
Goalpara . .	94,357	3,867	60,577	77,155	73,004	23,689	39,233	3,71,882
Kamrup . .	9,50,893	26,654	76,949	2,26,444	54,066	13,431	62,190	14,10 627
Nowgong . .	5,16,363	30,072	35,496	2,95,237	10,611	9,277	28,281	9,25,337
Darrang . .	4,85,458	13,507	36,195	2,90,526	29,711	15,293	29,270	8,99,961
Sibsagar . .	8,18,236	32,610	59,722	5,80,030	13,501	27,168	47,796	15,79 063
Lakhimpur . .	2,57,204	55,930	21,624	5,43,837	23,322	25,517	32,767	9,60,201
TOTAL .	31,22,511	1,62,640	2,90,563	20,13,229	2,04,215	1,14,375	2,39,537	61,47,071
				1900-01.				
Goalpara . .	1,11,566	11,690	68,830	74,332	90,407	27,491	47,704	4,32,020
Kamrup . .	12,37,444	21,070	1,01,126	2,13,888	63,434	12,127	61,805	17,10,894
Nowgong . .	5,50,558	19,983	36,723	2,79,401	10,258	7,911	25,584	9,30 418
Darrang . .	7,18,393	13,760	52,100	3,44,494	68,473	17,901	33,416	12,48,542
Sibsagar . .	13,72,293	43,917	1,01,085	6,87,266	31,656	40,432	78,744	23,55,393
Lakhimpur . .	5,45,487	66,459	45,311	7,47,698	80,961	49,220	64,007	15,99,143
TOTAL .	45,35,746	1,76,879	4,05,175	23,47,079	3,45,189	1,55,082	3,11,260	82 ,76,410

ANNEXURE G.

Special causes of mortality of immigrant coolies, 1891—1901.

This is an attempt to show that although the mortality in the decade ending 1901 was very high, from special causes which will be explained below and which are not likely to recur, the coolies who come to Assam do not disappear mysteriously, as is sometimes supposed in the recruiting districts, but can be accounted for to such degree of probability as the case admits of. The materials are uncertain but we have independent estimates of population by two census officers, Mr. Gait and Mr. Allen, which may be taken as the starting point of the examination.

2. The total number of foreign-born tea immigrants censused in the Assam Province—both on tea gardens and among the general population—was estimated by Mr. Gait for 1881 and 1891, and by Mr. Allen for 1901 as follows:—

1881	232,247
1891	433,199
1901	645,700

The number of tea immigrants coming to Assam, according to the Labour Immigration returns, was :—

1881 to 1890	345,937
1891 to 1900	594,286

3. In the period 1881 to 1891, if we assume a death-rate of 40 per 1,000 a year, which is rather below the normal Indian death-rate (but the proportion of children among tea coolies is smaller), we shall find that all the new immigrants of the decade are accounted for within the Assam Province, except some 15,300, who may be taken as having returned to their native districts. Possibly the mortality among these immigrants in this period may not have been at so high a rate as 40 per 1,000 a year. Thus:—

1. Population of 1881	232,247
2. Loss at 33·3 per cent. in 10 years	77,416
3. Balance remaining in 1891	154,831
4. New immigrants of 1881—1890	345,937
5. Loss at 18 per cent. in 10 years	62,269
6. Balance remaining in 1891	283,668
7. Total remaining in 1891 (column 3 *plus* column 6)	438,499
8. Deduct Estimated population censused in Assam	423,199
9. Balance to be accounted for outside the Province	15,300

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4. For 1891 to 1901, for reasons which will be explained below, we must allow a mortality of about 60 per 1,000 per annum for the new immigrants of the decade, the assumed death-rate of the old immigrants of 1891 remaining as before, 40 per 1,000. On this basis the results are :—

1. Population of 1891	423,199
2. Loss at 33·3 per cent. in 10 years	141,066
3. Balance remaining in 1901	282,133
4. New immigrants of 1891—1900	594,286
5. Loss at 28 per cent. in 10 years	166,400
6. Balance remaining in 1901	427,886
7. Total remaining in 1901	710,019
8. Deduct Estimated population censused in Assam	645,700
9. Balance to be accounted for outside the Province	64,319

5. This does not seem too large a number to be accounted for by return to their native districts or departure elsewhere from the Province, by "double" immigrations, or by inaccuracies in the returns or estimates. The mortality was especially high among Central Provinces immigrants, as almost the whole of the immigration from those Provinces took place in the latter half of the decade. Up to the end of 1894 the number of Central Provinces immigrants on tea gardens and outside could not have exceeded a few thousand.

6. The special causes of the above very lamentable mortality have now to be explained. I hope to be able to make it clear that there were at work during this period two causes of an exceptional kind not likely to occur again in combination. There is, of course, also the general cause that in both Valleys, and especially in the Assam Valley, it takes an immigrant from drier climates a couple of years or so to get acclimatised.

7. The first of the special causes arises from the nature of the immigration. The immigration of each year is noted on the margin (including some 3,000 Assamese wrongly returned as immigrants). No less than 249,883 immigrants came in the famine or scarcity period, 1895 to 1897, the majority of them probably in a condition already weakened by distress and insufficiency of food. These famine or scarcity affected immigrants take longer to acclimatise than others and are liable to greater mortality during acclimatisation. Probably also many of the immigrants in other years had suffered in the same way. These remarks are specially applicable to Central Provinces immigrants. Their adult immigration was a little over 80,000 in the decade (complete figures are not available), of which number over 45,000 came in the years 1895 to 1897, and only some 5,000 before 1895. The proportionate number of children (who are not shown in the returns according to their Provinces) would be not less than 15,000 for the years 1895 to 1897.

1891—49,908.
1892—56,050.
1893—50,675.
1894—46,530.
1895—72,837.
1896—81,115.
1897—95,931.
1898—49,169.
1899—31,908.
1900—62,733.

8. The second special cause arose in Assam. The period 1895 to 1898, of which 1897 was the worst year, was exceptionally unhealthy. A malaria wave went through the Province, aggravating the *kala-azar* in districts in which it existed, and also affecting other districts. The principal tea districts, Sylhet, Cachar, Sibsagar and, to a smaller extent, Lakhimpur, which were otherwise healthy, suffered more or less severely from it. No such unhealthiness has, so far as I am aware, been known in Assam before or since. The indigenous population suffered severely. It will be seen from the figures in the last paragraph that 299,052 immigrants came up in the years 1895 to 1898, including the 249,883 immigrants of the famine or scarcity years. These poor people had not a fair chance of getting acclimatised, and were bound to suffer heavily from the prevailing unhealthiness. It is specially to be regretted that the new recruiting field opened out in the Central Provinces started under such unfavourable circumstances.

A statement* is attached showing the proportion of deaths to births registered outside tea gardens among the local population of each plains district of Assam during the last 20 years. The statement excludes the tea garden figures and therefore relates almost entirely to the indigenous population. It will be seen that the reported mortality among them was generally highest in the period between 1893 and 1898.

* Not printed the information may be obtained from the Assam Sanitary Reports, the tea garden births and deaths, as shown in the Assam Labour Immigration Reports being deducted.

9. The special causes of high immigrant mortality in 1891 to 1900 thus were (*a*) the arrival of so many immigrants weakened by famine or scarcity, and liable to exceptional sickness and mortality anywhere, and more than ordinarily difficult to acclimatise in Assam; and (*b*) their arrival at an exceptionally unhealthy period unfavourable to acclimatisation. It may be mentioned that the years 1891 to 1894 too were on the whole less healthy than 1881 to 1890 or 1899 to date. From 1899 Assam has been healthy. Districts which suffered from *kala-azar* have recovered or are recovering. *Kala-azar* now prevails to any extent only over small areas in Lower Assam, where it is gradually dying out. There are comparatively few immigrants and not many tea gardens in those areas. The gardens there are popular with coolies and hardly require to import any labour; the coolies find their way down to them from higher up the Valley.

10. In the period 1871 to 1881, if we assume a population in 1871 of 100,000 (which is probably excessive: the imported labour force of tea gardens was returned at 39,904 in 1872), and an immigration of 240,000 (the immigration of 1872 to 1880 was 226,321, of whom 206,400 were imported between 1874 and 1880), and a death-rate of 40 per 1,000 (which is no doubt below the actual death-rate, there being some years of famine or scarcity in this period), there would be alive in 1881, 265,533 immigrants as against the Census Officer's estimate of 232,247, *i. e.*, a difference of 33,286. All this number may be accounted for as having returned to their native districts. We know that at that time they used to return much more than they do now. Even if the Census Officer's estimates of population in 1881 is excessive (it being remembered that the assumed population of 1871 is also probably excessive), we might safely allow for more immigrants than 33,286 returning home. But no such allowance is required, first, because the population of 1871 has probably been over-estimated, and secondly, because, as the tea garden returns for the latter part of this period seem to show, the disappearance by deaths has almost certainly been under-estimated.

11. The net result is that 1,180,223 tea immigrants, men, women and children, (including "double" immigrations) have entered Assam between 1871 and 1901, according to the Labour Immigration returns, and that at an assumed mortality of 40 per 1,000 throughout, except in the period 1891—1901 when the mortality of the new immigrants of the decade has been assumed to be at a rate of about 60 per 1,000 a year, they are all accounted for by death or residence in the Assam Province, according to the Census Officer's estimates of population, with the exception of 33,286 in 1871 to 1881; 15,300 in 1881 to 1891; and 64,319 in 1891 to 1901. These are the numbers left over, to be accounted for by double immigrations, by return to their native districts, and by departures elsewhere from Assam.

12. I hope I have been able to show to some degree of probability (1) that immigrants to Assam do not disappear inexplicably, but can be reasonably accounted for by death or residence in the Province, with a margin

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not too large to be otherwise explained; (2) that the high mortality of 1891—1900 was exceptional and was due to a combination of special causes not likely again to exist together at the same time to anything like the same degree; and (3) that the Assam tea districts are now healthy. The four principal tea districts have always been generally healthy, except in this bad period; and the Tezpur Sub-division, too, cannot be said to have been actually unhealthy.

APPENDIX III.

[Assam Valley Land Revenue Administration Report for 1903-04, paragraphs 5, 11, 12, 13, 23.

[Assam Valley Land Revenue Administration Report for 1904-05, paragraphs 11, 12.

APPENDIX IV.

[India Census Report, 1901, paragraphs 191—193.]

APPENDIX V.

Extracts from certain reports prepared under Sir H. Cotton's orders.

"At present coolie immigrants as a rule settle down in Assam with their families, and do not return to their own homes. This is a very beneficial result to the Province and the Chief Commissioner would much regret to see encouragement afforded to these people to return to the over-crowded districts from which they come. Time-expired coolies are far happier in Assam whether they continue to work in the gardens, or settle down to cultivate in independent settlements, or combine both occupations, than they would be if they abandoned this Province to return to their own country. It must be remembered that they have their families with them and the testimony of all observers conclusively shows that they live in comparative ease and comfort." (Assam Secretariat No. 265 Emigration 1,566-R., dated the 11th May 1897, paragraph 8.)

"The circumstances of the year were calculated to emphasise the fact that in spite of all drawbacks, the condition of the immigrant labourers on tea estates in Assam is far preferable to what it would have been if they had remained in their native districts. During the years 1895 and 1897 many thousands of human beings have through the instrumentality of the tea industry been rescued from actual destitution and afforded a favourable opportunity of making a fresh start in life." (Labour Immigration Report for 1897, paragraph 79.)

APPENDIX VI.—[NOT PRINTED].

APPENDIX VII.

The garden importations and death-rate.

Year.	Average labour force.	Number of new immigrants.	Percentage of new immigrants of year to labour force.	Percentage of new immigrants of year and of previous year to labour force.	Total number of registered deaths on tea gardens.	Total tea garden death-rate per 1,000.
1876	124,323	34,283	27·5	...	6,253	51·1
1877	146,513	31,897	21·7	45·2	7,465	50·9
1878	172,569	43,061	24·9	43·4	11,421	66·1
1879	184,935	24,712	13·3	36·6	9,450	50·9
1880	188,497	15,913	8·4	21·5	6,657	35·2
1881	194,182	17,116	8·8	17·0	6,167	31·7
1882	200,099	22,559	11·2	19·8	7,590	37·8
1883	229,867	32,138	13·9	23·7	9,535	41·3
1884	267,855	45,511	16·9	28·9	11,583	43·2
1885	289,574	29,398	10·2	25·8	10,711	36·8
1886	301,349	30,894	10·2	20·0	12,059	39·8
1887	320,408	36,463	11·3	21·0	11,633	36·2
1888	347,371	46,293	13·3	23·8	13,857	39·8
1889	386,532	55,658	14·4	26·4	16,212	41·8
1890	406,089	36,080	8·8	22·6	13,949	34·3
1891	429,148	49,908	11·6	20·0	15,832	36·8
1892	457,717	56,050	12·2	23·1	19,250	41·9
1893	479,743	50,675	10·5	22·2	15,982	33·2
1894	494,336	46,530	9·4	19·6	15,805	31·9
1895	526,833	72,837	13·8	22·6	17,740	33·6
1896	571,412	81,115	14·2	26·9	18,272	32·0
1897	630,107	95,931	15·2	28·1	26,120	41·4
1898	642,283	49,169	7·6	22·5	20,017	31·1
1899	640,165	31,908	4·9	12·6	17,610	27·5
1900	664,897	62,733	9·4	14·2	19,603	29·4
1901	653,614	26,223	4·0	13·6	16,904	25·8
1902	January to	June. No	statistics.			
1902-03	644,045	26,684	4·1	8·2	16,376	25·4
1903-04	654,021	22,162	3·4	7·4	15,752	24·1
1904-05	657,700	24,209	3·6	7·0	15,145	23·0

APPENDIX VIII.

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Adult immigration and labour force.

Year.	Sylhet.			Cachar.			Assam Valley.		
	Average adult labour force.	Adult immigration.	Average Act labourers.	Average adult labour force.	Adult immigration.	Average Act labourers.	Average adult labour force.	Adult immigration.	Average Act labourers.
1883 .	23,073	6,678	5,149	41,897	4,881	11,596	88,616	14,851	42.332
1884 .	29,351	6,567	8,401	46,480	6,226	16,921	101,791	19,954	55.414
1885 .	32,379	4,438	9,059	48,036	3,435	17,207	107,847	13,271	58,527
1886 .	35,414	5,277	9,800	46,931	3.577	14,414	109,730	13,861	57,343
1887 .	38,018	4,494	9,282	48,726	3,712	10,992	116,248	20,884	60,561
1888 .	42,787	6,572	8,914	51,069	4.896	10,846	126,005	21,849	67,353*
1889 .	47,868	7,079	9,723	54,675	5,677	10,776	139,754	24,792	77.032
1890 .	50,198	5,003	9,404	55,463	2 832	9.170	144,448	18,370	82,951
1891 .	53,241	8,053	7,919	57,392	4,789	7,709	154,681	25,097	92,756
1892 .	57,942	8,195	7,194	59,153	6,299	7.310	166,724	27,308	101,995
1893 .	60,271	5 895	7,859	66,470	5 829	7.960	175,817	25,419	106,208
1894 .	61,456	7,606	9,202	66,641	4,912	7,203	182,670	23.188	102 059
1895 .	71,201	18,581	11,226	68,436	10,284	6,856	194,661	27,636	103,730
1896 .	81,461	18,641	11,953	74,386	9,866	6,504	210,613	32,704	112,632
1897 .	88,504	11,994	13,115	80,255	8,517	5,578	233,436	45,817	128,135
1898 .	86,632	7,629	12.079	79,584	3,915	4,364	238,230	23,972	126 555
1899 .	84,706	3,903	9,516	78,342	2,142	3,202	237,057	19,827	119,240
1900 .	87,363	8,490	5.834	80,103	4,607	2,235	247,760	31,947	125,327
1901 .	85,489	2,234	3,182	77.484	2,021	1,508	241.265	15,632	114,959
1902-03 .	82.552	2,354	1,757	72,124	933	848	243,248	16,862	93,569
1903-04 .	82,942	1,933	1,550	71.587	1,550	1,320	248,094	14,253	85,922
1904-05 .	83,551	2,401	1,478	71,758	1,393	1,733	251,948	15,256	78,933

APPENDIX IX.

Importation rate for maintaining labour force.

	Assam Valley.		Surma Valley.	
	Adults.	Total	Adults.	Total.
1. Labour force at beginning of 1902-03 . .	239,958	379,633	154,997	257,490
2. Importations, 1902-03 to 1904-05 . .	46,371	59,084	10,647	13,971
3. Total of columns 1 and 2, *i.e.*, what the labour force would have been had there been no net loss.	286,329	438,747	165,644	271,461
4. Actual labour force at end of 1904-05 . .	254,248	404,455	155,917	259,841
5. Net loss in 1902-03 to 1904-05, *i.e.*, difference between column 3 and column 4.	32,081	34,292	9,727	11,620
6. Net loss per annum	10,694	11,431	3,242	3,873
7. Average of labour force at beginning of each year.	245,381	389,490	154,685	258,909
8. Importation rate necessary to maintain labour force at strength, *i.e.*, percentage on annual labour force (column 7) of net annual loss (column 6).	4·3	2·9	2·1	1·5

APPENDIX X.

(Printed at page 292, Assam Special Report of 1890.)

APPENDIX XI.

Extract from speech of Chairman, Duars Tea Company, at 20th Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company, 1905, (as reported in the "Englishman").

"With regard to the labour difficulty there are not a few interested in tea in other districts who have pointed to the Duars as being favoured with regard to labour. I may tell them that they are labouring under a delusion—that their views are fallacious. The scarcity of labour in the Duars under the "free labour" system has for the last five years become more and more intense, especially during the height of the season. In August 1898 this Company had a daily average working force of 6,636 coolies, equal to 1·16 coolies per acre; in August 1904 this had declined to 3,358 coolies or 0·59 coolie per acre. A higher wage is no remedy; for it only means less work and more leisure. On the average coolies do not work more than fifteen days in the month in the Duars."

APPENDIX XII.

(Assam Labour Immigration Report for 1888, paragraph 58, page 65.)

APPENDIX XIII.

Percentage, Judicial punishments of Assam tea garden labour force.

Year.	Assam Tea Coolies.		Bengal Police (Men).	
	Penal Code and local and special laws, except Acts I, VI and XIII.	Act I of 1882, Act VI of 1901, Act XIII of 1859.	Penal Code.	Act V of 1861.
1893	0·24	0·41	1·0	0·5
1894	0·21	0·36	1 2	0·6
1895	0·17	0·32	1·1	0·4
1896	0·23c	0·28	1·1	0·7
1897	0·19	0·23	0·7	0·7
1898	0·14 garden offences (Penal Code.)	0·14	1·1,	0·6
1899	0·04	0·13	0·7	0·6
1900	0·05	0·12	0·8	0·6
1901	0·04	0·10	0·8	0·5
1902-1903	0·03	0·08	0·9	0·6
1903-1904	0·02	0·07	0·7	0·4
1904-1905	0·01	0·07		

Notes. (1) The tea coolie percentage is calculated on adult labour force only.

(2) In 1899 the form of return was changed and from that year to 1904-05 only garden offences under the Penal Code are included in column 2, *viz.*, offences of the unlawful assembly, rioting, assault and intimidation class. From 1893 to 1898 all convictions are included.

(3) From 1893 to 1901, Act XIII cases ending in the coolie agreeing to return to the garden are included as convictions. From 1902-03 these are excluded and only such Act XIII cases as end in punishment are shown.

APPENDIX XIV.

Extract from speech of Sir P. Hutchins in Council, 23rd March 1893.

"My next objection is that initial registration has been condemned on its own merits.

"The point has been argued as if the only objection to compulsory registration was the trifling fee which it involves, but if I have ever spoken of its expensive character, it was certainly not any such legitimate charges which I had in mind.

"It is not at all true that registration was dispensed with in order to cheapen the supply of labour. 'Its main evil'—His Honour Sir Charles Elliott once wrote, and he was only summing up in his graphic style what the records show—'Its main evil was the great delay and annoyance experienced by the recruits, the difficulty of getting any one in the Collector's cutcherry to attend to the business, the necessity of bribing every one all round, and the danger either that the whole registration was done so perfunctorily that it was no safeguard whatever, or else that it would be done by some one who was fanatically persuaded that no Hindu could possibly emigrate except under enticement or compulsion.'"

APPENDIX XV.

Sketch of labour scheme on lines suggested by the Dum Duma planters.

The difficulties in carrying out the proposals in Circular 15-R., dated 28th March 1905, are:—

(1) The withdrawal of Sections 195 and 196 would render necessary—

(*a*) more stringent provisions against enticement;

(*b*) additional facilities for taking out warrants; and

(*c*) some special provision as to arrest of new arkati coolies.

(2) The withdrawal of the Act from any district or the removal of a district from the list of labour districts would necessitate fresh legislation for the control of arkati recruiting.

(3) It would further necessitate legislation for a local labour law as the proposed "standard procedure" under Act XIII could not include all that is required, *e.g.*—

(*a*) penalties against enticement; and

(*b*) sufficient protection to the labourer.

2. It is generally desired—

(1) that all arkati recruiting should be brought under the control of Chapter III of the Act. Some would abolish arkati recruiting altogether, but the great majority think that it is still necessary for the Assam Valley;

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(2) that the power of private arrest should be allowed to stand as necessary in respect of arkati coolies during the term of their initial contracts; and

(3) that sardari recruiting should be released from all restrictions as far as possible.

Subject to the above many planters are willing to give up Act contracts altogether for sardari coolies and for local and time expired coolies.

3. The above might be carried out by repealing Chapter IV and Sections 118 and 121 of the Act, with the necessary consequential changes. Chapter III of the Act should stand, and no arkati should be allowed to recruit except under that chapter. Section 90 of the Act should stand to admit of free sardari recruiting, which should be free of all restrictions except so far as necessary—

(*a*) to maintain a minimum of sanitary supervision; and

(*b*) to guard against arkatis being passed off as garden sardars.

Section 90, which will be the only form of sardari recruiting remaining should, however, be amended and made more elastic. There are complaints that it is not conveniently workable on certain points.

The power of summary arrest, to be retained in respect of Chapter III contracts, may, if desired, be qualified by fixing a time-limit after desertion for its exercise, by requiring the employer to apply for warrant simultaneously with taking steps for arrest of the deserter, or by such other means as may be decided upon.

4. The above proposals would restrict Act contracts to contractors' coolies engaged in the recruiting districts. For sardari, local and time-expired coolies, a simple local law on the lines of Act XIII may be enacted to replace the latter Act. Provision would be required on the following points:—

(1) Maximum period of contract, and interpretation of contract expressed in terms of working days.

(2) That a bonus paid outright (not necessarily a recoverable advance) should be sufficient consideration for the contract.

(3) Minimum amount of such bonus or advance.

(4) That payment of expenses of importation up to a reasonable amount should be sufficient consideration for the contract.

(5) Employers' returns and magistrates' inspections—on the lines of Sections 122 and 123 of Act VI.

(6) Repatriation of fraudulently recruited emigrants—on the lines of Section 161 of Act VI.

(7) Repatriation of physically incapacitated emigrants—on the lines of Section 159 of Act VI.

(8) Cancellation of contracts. This provision is necessary for the protection of the labourer. For though there will be no power of summary arrest, the contract will still be a penal contract. A power to cancel for sufficient reason should be conferred upon the magistrate, and as some magistrates may (and occasionally do) exercise this power without due discretion, it should be provided that the employer should always have an opportunity of showing cause against the cancellation, and that, on the employer giving notice of appeal, the cancellation shall be stayed pending appeal to the Commissioner of the Division.

(9) Redemption of contract—on the lines generally of Section 156 of Act VI.

(10) A minimum of sanitary supervision. This is implied under heads (5) and (8). Detailed regulations are not required, but there should be some legal power to enforce orders, and in very bad cases to cancel contracts.

(11) A penalty should be provided for enticement. The presumption should be against the employer in whose service a contract labourer is found and substantial compensation should be awardable to the employer with whom the labourer was under contract, if the employer in whose service the labourer was found cannot show that he took reasonable and available precautions to ascertain whether the labourer was under contract or not.

(12) Additional facilities might be provided for obtaining warrants. The following have been suggested (*a*) that telegraphic warrants might be allowed, and (*b*) the appointment of honorary magistrates near groups of gardens. This point might, perhaps, be executively arranged.

It has also been suggested that the labourer should be returnable to the garden after imprisonment and should be liable to prosecution again for non-fulfilment of the same contract. I do not think that this suggestion is consistent with a system under which private arrest is not allowed. The penalty provided by Act XIII seems sufficient.

5. It is claimed for the above scheme that it would provide a labour system suitable to both the Assam and the Surma Valleys, and enable control to be exercised over arkati recruiting while leaving sardari recruiting free.

C. I. G. P. O.—No. 549 S. A. L. C.—10-8-1906.—1110.—S. C. M.

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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ASSAM LABOUR ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

IN THE

RECRUITING AND LABOUR DISTRICTS.

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